



Beacon Community Schools

IGNITING ENGAGEMENT OF YOUTH & COMMUNITIES
IN OUR NATION'S CITIES



YDI

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

121 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013 · www.ydiinstitute.org



Who we are...

The Youth Development Institute (YDI), founded in 1991 by Michelle Cahill, is a capacity building organization that provides services to youth programs both in NYC and throughout the U.S. YDI provides technical assistance, disseminates information, informs policy, and conducts research to strengthen the quality and increase the availability of positive opportunities for young people.

Our mission and goals...

Since its inception, YDI has been committed to addressing the many challenges and opportunities associated with helping young people to transition successfully to adulthood. YDI also works to help individual organizations and the field of youth development to address the gaps, barriers and opportunities associated with creating successful and sustainable youth programming. In response to these needs, YDI seeks to fulfill two main goals. First and foremost, YDI seeks to support the growth and development of young people by strengthening the quality and increasing the availability of experiences offered by the organizations that serve them. Second, YDI seeks to build the field of youth development through the development and dissemination of promising practices that lead to better outcomes for youth.

Our approach...

YDI works with organizations to apply the most promising research and practices so that young people can grow and develop through powerful, sustained, and meaningful experiences. Research demonstrates that certain experiences help young people to develop fully and successfully. These include close relationships with caring adults, high expectations, engaging activities, opportunities to contribute and continuity of support. This strength-based youth development approach has shaped YDI's work years.

Our Clients...

YDI works with approximately 200 organizations to increase their capacity to effectively work with youth. It provides intense customized technical assistance to approximately 75 organizations (locally and nationally) in the areas of youth development, literacy, work-readiness and skill building that prepares youth for post-secondary success. YDI supports many of these organizations to develop new models and adapt existing evidence-based models to better meet the needs of the youth they serve. Combined, these organizations serve youth who are considered low skilled and disconnected, over aged and under credited, formerly incarcerated, in school, out of school, in foster care, in college and in afterschool programs. Supports offered by YDI are delivered in a variety of ways including through trainings/workshops, on-site coaching and in local and national networks.

Our Partners...

YDI also invests considerable effort in developing thought partners and building learning communities, both locally and nationally, that aid in building a collective understanding of what makes a difference in the lives of youth at the point of service. Our partners include city agencies (Department of Education, Department of Youth and Community Development, Center for Economic Opportunities, Administration for Children Services and Probation Department), funders, policymakers, community organizations, schools, and colleges.

The Wallace Foundation is a national philanthropy that seeks to improve education and enrichment for disadvantaged children. Wallace's major initiatives include efforts to help selected cities make good out-of-school time programs available to many more children. Find out more at www.wallacefoundation.org

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This paper represents the collective vision of the Beacon Community Schools National Network. The concepts put forward in this document were cultivated over a three-day convening in New York City in October 2011 and through monthly phone meetings of intermediaries, funders and practitioners from around the country.

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Introduction

In 2011, the Beacon Community Schools (BCS) model celebrated its 20th anniversary. With support from The Wallace Foundation, the Youth Development Institute (YDI) took the opportunity to reflect on the successes and challenges of BCS initiatives across the country. This paper outlines Beacon Community Schools in their historical and current socio-political context, features exciting developments from BCS across the country and presents next steps to ensure sustainability in the next twenty years.¹

Overview

“Our policies and our institutions must apply what we know about development and learning to fully equip our young citizens. Anything less is untenable for our economy, unsustainable for our democracy, and unacceptable for our children.” —**BARACK OBAMA**

Today, cities across the United States face critical challenges in the schools and neighborhoods where children and youth are attempting to learn, grow, and develop as leaders. From San Francisco to New York City, young people face the obstacles of youth violence, economic inequity, and the pervasive disparity of academic achievement along race and class lines. It has been demonstrated that engaging young people and community members to provide input about the issues and institutions that shape their lives is critical for developing effective policies (Zeldin et. al, 2009) and maintaining a healthy democracy (Wheeler and Roach, 2005). However, youth from urban cities, particularly youth of color and youth from low-income neighborhoods, are not engaged as leaders and contributors in their schools and communities. Dialogues about the challenges faced by our education system or youth violence too often exclude the voices of the people most impacted by these issues—young people and other community members. Mark Warren of The Harvard Graduate School of Education argues that if urban school reform in the United States is to be successful, it must be linked to the revitalization of the communities around those schools with young people, parents and community members leading the way (Warren, 2005).

¹ In October 2011, The Youth Development Institute and Neighborhood Family Services Coalition were supported by The Wallace Foundation to convene Beacon stakeholders (funders, policy-makers, intermediaries, and practitioners) in New York City to mark the 20th anniversary of Beacon's inception. The convening offered participants the opportunity to reflect on the strengths and challenges of the current Beacons movement. This paper is a result of those conversations.

Beacon Community Schools provide opportunities for youth and community engagement. Many BCS around the country have the infrastructure, articulated program strategies and methods for engaging youth who have been least engaged and most impacted by critical urban issues. Like many community schools, Beacons are committed to school transformation that aims to promote healthy development and learning among youth (Anderson-Butcher, 2004; Doll & Lyon, 1998) and other goals related to family and community well-being. At their best, Beacon Community Schools strive for multi-level impact by engaging youth and adults in community development, often with young people at the helm (Youth Development Institute, 2009). BCS provide spaces for community members to celebrate, organize and strategize, thereby enhancing social capital, cohesion and efficacy. Services and community building events are offered during the day, evenings and on weekends in the school building, effectively opening up the space for use by a broad swath of community residents.

Beacon Community Schools transform spaces and provide activities for young people and the community. In addition, like other community school models, BCS foster partnerships that maximize resources and provide “collective impact” (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Ideally, the emphasis on partnership happens at two levels: school and initiative. At the school level, community-based organizations partner with school administrators, local police, civic organizations, youth councils, and community councils in service of development for young people, programs and communities. Similarly, strong city-wide Beacon initiatives involve city agencies, school districts, health departments, private funders, and juvenile justice departments to maximize cities’ resources and collective impact. At their best, BCS emphasize adult-youth partnership to build the leadership capacity of young people and adults so communities experience sustainable transformation from within (Youth Development Institute, 2009).

Beacon Community School History

“And what will the community school be? The program itself will be shaped in each community by young people, their parents, Community Boards, merchants, teachers, social service organizations, police and every positive force in the ten targeted communities. Imagine.”

—RICHARD L. MURPHY, EXCERPT FROM THE COVER LETTER
OF THE FIRST BEACON RFP IN NYC IN 1991

Supporting young people and community members to be engaged citizens who shape the institutions and the issues that impact their lives is not a novel idea. Like all community schools, Beacons trace their roots to the reform era of early twentieth century America. Educators of that time, among them Jane Addams, John Dewey, and Clarence Perry, first outlined a model of schools that served as the center of neighborhood social life and the agent of neighborhood-based social services (Mott, 1993). These reformers aimed to support education, civic engagement and community development for recent immigrants to the United States.

In 1991, after key New York City neighborhoods were decimated by the crack epidemic of the 1980’s, youth development specialists and policy makers looked for solutions that incorporated both youth and community development. In 1991, The Department of Youth Services Commissioner, Richard Murphy,

Fund for the City of New York Vice President, Michelle Cahill and then New York City Mayor, David Dinkins conceptualized and led the implementation of the Beacon model in 10 neighborhoods in New York City. The Beacons model partnered a community-based organization (CBO) with a public school to create a community center to provide services, supports and a space for community residents to thrive. Simultaneously, Michelle Cahill created the Youth Development Institute (YDI), a program of the Fund for the City of New York that would serve as the intermediary to document and to provide support and technical assistance, to the Beacons in New York City.

One of the earliest Beacons, Countee Cullen in Harlem, was operated by the Rheedlen Center for Children and Families, now Geoffrey Canada's Harlem Children's Zone. This center became the model for the "Promise Neighborhood" federal program. In the book *Common Purpose: Strengthening Families and Neighborhoods to Rebuild America*, Lisbeth Schorr (1997) writes, "Among Canada's many wonderful stories is one about how eager he was to get one of the Beacon grants for his organization—for two reasons: first, he wanted a place...that could engage everyone in the community and provide a safe haven for its children. He saw the opportunities to do more than just assemble a bunch of services for children and families.' He saw it as the basis for a community development strategy. He wanted it to be a place where the community residents were involved from the beginning in developing plans, and where well-trained and caring adults could stand side by side with children...The second reason Canada was so eager for a Beacon grant is that he saw the Beacons as a way of going to scale. Canada remarked: "If we want to deal with violence, educational failure, teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, lack of employment, crime, and AIDS, the real problem is not one of individual program design but of scale... we can't expect to make a difference unless we are willing to talk about comprehensive services for massive numbers of children and their families" (Schorr, 1997).

Concurrent to the expansion of Beacon Community Schools from the initial 10 locations to 80 in NYC, BCS expanded around the country through a national adaptation project funded by the Dewitt Wallace Foundation. The adaptation gained momentum in cities including Denver, Oakland, Minneapolis, and Savannah. Residents and child advocates in San Francisco demonstrated at the door of city government to bring Beacon Community Schools there in 1994. In 1998, Minneapolis launched their citywide BCS initiative with a youth leadership retreat of over 300 young people. Through the efforts of a coalition of policy makers and leaders from the Denver Public School District, the City and County of Denver, local foundations and community members, three Beacon Community Schools opened their doors in 1998. BCS were started in West Palm Beach, FL in 2000 and in Philadelphia in 2002.

A national network of BCS cities formed as Beacom Community Schools expanded across the country. The network was led by the Youth Development Institute, was funded by The Wallace Foundation in 1998. Shared strategies for training, evaluation, and documenting best practices emerged. The Advancing Youth Development curriculum (developed in 1991) was spread by YDI through a train-the-trainer model across the grant cities. YDI documented and supported efforts to sustain the Beacons (Youth Development Institute, 1997; 2000; 2002). The role of technical assistance, maintaining a common vision, and convening center directors proved critical during periods of rapid growth. Schorr (1997) writes that the Beacon model's expansion supported the idea that "with a mandate to reflect local needs and a highly capable intermediary entity to provide support, it is possible to "replicate" a strong framework and a few clearly defined principles, while allowing—indeed encouraging—the most profound local variations."

Thus BCS became the first citywide Out-of-School time initiative to be replicated across the country, a pre-cursor to the many current-day citywide and place-based neighborhood efforts to expand and strengthen opportunities for youth in the nation's cities. Over the last 20 years, BCS models expanded to over 10 cities across the country, though not all had the political staying power and intermediary support to sustain their efforts. Some merged the BCS efforts with other out-of-school time efforts. This often resulted in a decreased emphasis on the community development strategies Geoffrey Canada espoused. National efforts slowed when funding was lost in 2000. In 2006, YDI reconvened a national network with support from Atlantic Philanthropies under the auspices of a young adolescent initiative. In the last few years, the national network has developed a new set of core elements, national advocacy and professional development strategies, and provided cross-city learning opportunities that have strengthened the capacity of Beacons Community Schools across the country.

Beacon Community Schools Common Characteristics

Today, Beacon Community Schools serve over 150,000 children, youth and adults around the country. Beacons are some of the 5,000 community schools flourishing across the nation. Although BCS are designed to adjust to the needs of the communities in which they exist there are several common characteristics. Beacon Community Schools:

- Are led by community organizations and based in schools
- Use a youth development approach
- Use a community-youth development framework
- Build a structure for interagency collaboration, programming and partnership
- Share responsibility with partners to support a broad set of outcomes for youth, families and communities

In addition to these core characteristics, the BCS national network has chosen to focus in the most immediate future on emphasizing three new common characteristics through intentional and targeted capacity building efforts across cities. Beacon Community Schools will:

- Create pathways and continuity for young people to take on leadership roles in BCS programs and initiatives often called a Ladder to Leadership.
- Utilize social group work methodology
- Have strong youth-adult partnerships that guide the work of BCS from the site to the initiative level

Data snapshots have been compiled to give a sense of the impact of BCS in each city. Data differs greatly between cities as no national study has been conducted using standardized measures; however, these snapshots provide evidence of impact on a variety of outcomes. Outcomes such as academic achievement, school connectedness, socio-emotional health, civic engagement and in some cities, outcomes for adults are explicated in the chart below:

EVALUATIVE FINDINGS ABOUT THE IMPACT OF BEACON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

San Francisco, California

EVALUATOR: Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) from 2007-10, Resource Development Associates (RDA) from 2004-7, Stanford University School of Education (SUSE) from 2003-4, and Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) from 1998-2000 describe these results in detail.

METHODOLOGY: Surveys, Ethnography, Test scores

San Francisco operates 8 Beacon Community Schools (and 9 satellite programs) serving 10,146 youth and their families

<p>SCHOOL RELATED IMPACT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 71% of youth reported having opportunities for interesting and varied skill-building • Compared to their peers, students who participated in Beacons for a year or more were 61% less likely to go from a high to a low level of school effort. Thirty-three percent were also less likely to exhibit falling self-efficacy in the 18-month follow up period. • Increased level of Beacon participation had a positive association with school attendance(analysis of unexcused absences in multiple years of Beacons evaluation) • Beacon participants who attended 30 or more days had higher GPA's than both the comparison group and the "less than 30 days" Beacon group (dosage analysis through special funding secured for the 2005-6 evaluation.)
<p>SOCIO-EMOTIONAL IMPACT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical and emotional safety – 09-10: 74% • Cultural affirmation – 09-10: 73%, • Adult knowledge of youth – 09-10: 74%, • Adult caring relationships with youth: 09-10: 73%, • Overall satisfaction with Beacon program – 09-10: 82%
<p>CIVIC ENGAGEMENT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth leadership councils exist across the Initiative • Richmond Village Beacon leads all cultural leadership groups at Washington High School (Black Student Union, Latinos Unidos, Kaibigang Pilipino, Gay Straight Alliance, Lion Dance, Spanish-speaking cultural group) and a multicultural leadership forum that unites youth leaders from all the groups. The Black Student Union (BSU) has been awarded the best BSU in the state of California two years in a row (2009-10 and 2010-11). • Western Addition Beacon has worked with its lead agency to bring low-income youth into the YMCA's Youth and Government Program, an exceptional opportunity in civic education that includes a mock trial, a Bill of Hearing night in San Francisco's City Hall, and a culminating weekend in which youth "takeover" the Capitol in Sacramento. • Mission, OMI/Excelsior, and Visitation Valley Beacons have been at the forefront of neighborhood gang and violence prevention initiatives.
<p>FAMILY IMPACT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 183% increase in adult participants from 859 adults, family and community members served participants in BCS programs in 2007-08 to 2,430 adults participating in 2009-10. • Beacon Community Schools offer ESL, technology classes, job training, physical health opportunities for the entire community (tai chi, volleyball, salsa), community enrichment (photography, family ceramics) tax aid, and much more. These classes occur at Beacon Community Schools in the evenings and on weekends throughout the year and are available to parents and community members of all ages. • Beacon Community Schools have regular community events to address community need. Weekly food pantries, Parent Workshops (How to Talk to Teenagers, College Nights, A-G Requirements) Family Literacy/Math, Nutrition Nights, and Family Field Trips are planned to increase connectedness to school.

Minneapolis, Minnesota

EVALUATOR: Blue Water Associates

METHODOLOGY: Surveys and test scores

Minneapolis operates 8 Beacon Community Schools serving 2500 youth and their families

SCHOOL RELATED IMPACT

- Students who attended Beacons for more than 90 days were twice as likely to be proficient in reading, based on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment results.
- Young people in Minneapolis Beacons felt more connected to their school
- Results of a survey with over 1200 teachers revealed that student participation and volunteering in class as well as school performance and motivation to learn was 10-20% higher for Beacons students than survey results from similar programs in the state and nation.

SOCIO-EMOTIONAL IMPACT

- 98% say “I feel welcome here.”
- 99% say “The staff expect me to do well in school.”
- 90% say “The staff expect me to attend school each day.”
- 94% say “What we do here will help me in my future.”

New York, New York

EVALUATOR: Policy Studies Associates (2011),

METHODOLOGY: Surveys and Observations

New York City operates 80 Beacon Community Schools serving 96000 youth and their families

SCHOOL RELATED IMPACT

Youth reported that the Beacon helped them complete their homework more often

SOCIO-EMOTIONAL IMPACT

- Program participation also made youth feel more confident
- A majority of respondents reported strong relationships with their peers at the Beacon
- A majority of respondents reported being treated with respect by the staff
- Observations of a sample of programs also found staff were warm and caring, and youth were typically on-task and engaged

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Youth reported gaining awareness of their communities and ways to assist others

Denver, Colorado

EVALUATOR: Denver Public Schools Assessment, Research & Evaluation

METHODOLOGY: Archival data from DPS around student CSAP (state test scores) Scores, Day School Attendance & 9th Grade Completion, Student pre/post surveys looking at School Connection, Teacher point-in-time surveys looking back at students' participation in class, behavior, etc.

Denver operates 6 Beacon Community Schools serving 4,000 youth and families

SCHOOL RELATED IMPACT

- The 2010 CSAP scores of students who regularly attended programming were consistently higher than students who did not attend or did not regularly attend programming.
- Across schools and content areas attendees were more likely to be proficient or advanced and less likely to be unsatisfactory than non-regular participants.
- Regular attendees demonstrated a school attendance rate that was 3% higher (5 school days) than students who did not attend for at least 30 days.

SOCIO- EMOTIONAL IMPACT

- Increased self-confidence and other pro-social skills
- Lower rates of negative behaviors (i.e. suspension, expulsion)

With exciting results evident in various initiatives, there is opportunity to strengthen the collection of data across cities in order to tell the full story of BCS. The BCS national network aims to further develop the data collected about Beacon Community Schools across the country by:

- Creating outcomes and indicators of success measured across all cities for young people, adults and communities
- Collecting data on the relationship between program quality and youth and community engagement
- Creating a longitudinal study of Beacon alumni of the Ladders to Leadership program model

Challenges for Beacons Today

While data from Beacon Community School initiatives across the country is encouraging, BCS inevitably face a range of challenges from the program to initiative level. The BCS National Network has prioritized two major challenges mentioned in this paper: budget cuts and issues of quality assurance. The National Network is committed to addressing these challenges in the next phase of its work.

Budget Cuts

In recent years, youth and community services have faced drastic budget cuts resulting in program closings and/or reduced funding levels. Simultaneously, school budgets are suffering, making it difficult to keep buildings open to the public. The disinvestment in school and out-of-school time systems makes the reality of a school-based community center that offers robust programming until 9 pm, and is open on weekends and holidays, difficult to sustain. With funding from Atlantic Philanthropies, BCS initiatives have been supported by Neighborhood Family Services Coalition and the Youth Development Institute to increase local and national advocacy efforts. Increasing the visibility and sustainability of BCS around the country is a critical strategy to fighting cuts that could potentially impact the quality of Beacon Community Schools.

Quality Assurance Issues:

Pushing to retain slots in BCS's must be accompanied by a push to retain quality at every center. In addition to advocacy, the BCS national network is committed to ensuring quality across the BCS initiative in the next few years by:

- Promoting the use of quality assessment tools across all citywide initiatives
- Offering national professional development opportunities to all BCS staff that are aligned with the core characteristics

Promising Practices

Despite the challenges facing Beacons today, it is evident from recent evaluation data that many Beacon Community School Initiatives across the country are successful in supporting youth and adults. Many Beacons have found themselves in a unique position to engage urban youth and families as decision-makers and leaders on the local, citywide, and even national level through their emphasis on youth and community engagement. The design of the Beacon as a hub in challenged neighborhoods provides a unique vantage point from which to organize and engage youth and families as partners who might otherwise be seen solely as recipients of services. The citywide reach of BCS efforts to expand learning and opportunities for young people and families in urban communities can also position Beacons as a key player at the municipal level. The following section will highlight promising practices from Beacon Community Schools around the country that are playing a critical role in the lives of young people and their communities.

Ladders to Leadership in New York City and Beyond

The BCS intergenerational model, engaging people ages 6 to 60, creates opportunities for the development of unique programs such as Ladders to Leadership (LTL). LTL supports youth's procurement of increasingly important roles and responsibilities in their BCS and in their communities as they move from 5th grade through college. BCS have used LTL programs to increase retention of young people over

time (Baker & Tamanas, 2010). The intergenerational LTL program allows BCS to develop high quality staff from within and to support growth from participant to worker (Youth Development Institute, 2009). Communities benefit from the LTL's integral community service component. Recent data from the Harvard Family Research Project found the strongest program level indicator of retention of middle and High School youth across OST programs in six cities is youth leadership (Deschenes et. al, 2010). The LTL model has enjoyed considerable success in NYC, Minneapolis, and San Francisco and is slated to increase in scale in both the NYC and Denver Beacon Community School initiatives.

Ladders to leadership not only exist at the program level but can be found across whole BCS initiatives. In Minneapolis, for example, the Ladder of Leadership is an age appropriate, progressive leadership development model embedded in a culture of youth-adult partnership, youth engagement, and youth voice. Scaffolded, city-wide, network opportunities ensure young people are supported to take on increasingly important roles and responsibilities at the initiative level as they transition from elementary school, to middle school, to high school, to college. Many other cities in the BCS national network are moving to create Ladders to Leadership at the initiative level.

Summer Learning in Philadelphia

Four years ago the City of Philadelphia reorganized its out of school time funding and stopped using the name "Beacon." Many Philadelphia agencies working with youth in schools continue to embrace the Beacon characteristics. One agency, EducationWorks, the largest provider of after school and summer programs in schools in Philadelphia, has remained active in the BCS National Network. EducationWorks has pushed the Network to consider summer learning projects promoting youth and community engagement. Since 2010, EducationWorks has engaged hundreds of teenagers in a summer program providing paid employment for work addressing city residents' recycling habits. Through a partnership with the Philadelphia Streets Department, Recyclebank, and the Philadelphia Youth Network, the program recruits, trains, and supervises youth who provide outreach to targeted neighborhoods with low household recycling participation. Students receive Recyclebanks' weekly training on the Recycling Rewards initiative, which incentivizes and increases recycling levels by providing households with valuable coupons and discounts to a range of retail, restaurant, and entertainment venues. During the weekly training day, students receive work readiness and environmental awareness instruction. Throughout the project, students learn neighborhood resource mapping, the influence of socioeconomic status on recycling, marketing, event promotion and the green collar job industry. The partnership among EducationWorks, the city and Recyclebank has brought additional training and resources for both staff and young people. Young people also reported feeling that they were part of a larger city-wide initiative.

From Co-location, to Alignment, to Integration: The Evolution of the Beacons/School Partnership in Denver, Colorado

Denver opened its first Beacon Community Schools in 1998, and in the first several years, focused on communication to increase the efficacy of co-location within schools. Beacons and schools continued to develop organizations' leadership and staff by aligning procedures and activities. By the 10th anniversary of Beacon Community Schools in Denver, key individuals were working collaboratively at the organization, school, district and city levels. Three sites expanded into five and more than one thousand youth and families received high quality positive youth development, out-of-school time programming, parent engagement activities and family support services. Beacons and school staff worked together to plan program activities (for both the traditional school day and out-of-school time) that would enhance

young people’s educational achievement and enrichment opportunities. While school staff brought emphasis on academic achievement and school performance to the table, equally heard by all was the Beacons voice advocating for youth-adult partnerships, high quality programming and invested community based organizations. Beacons and school staff devised plans to engage youth, parents and partners to provide real input, feedback and direction for future offerings within both the school and Beacons.

An example of this is the collective impact realized at the Cole Beacon Neighborhood Center, a partnership between the Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Denver and Denver Public Schools Cole Arts & Sciences Academy (CASA). The Cole Beacons team is just as much a part of the CASA staff as they are of the Boys and Girls Club staff. Together, the CASA and Boys and Girls Club staff:

- Jointly pursue and share funding that assists with academic instruction, arts and recreation programming and leadership development;
- Collaboratively plan the design, staff and outreach for critical summer academic and enrichment programming;
- Work together to provide real-life opportunities to connect young people with leaders from the community;
- Work together to engage parents through varied opportunities to ensure youth and family input is integrated within all facets of the school community.

Citywide Youth Engagement in Evaluation and Program Quality Improvement in Minneapolis

Minneapolis Beacon Community Schools work in partnership with young people to implement city-wide systems for staff development, quality assessment and improvement, and evaluation designed to meet desired outcomes for young people. Youth engagement is a key strategy for staff development in Minneapolis. Minneapolis developed a citywide youth-adult partnership board that hosts the Beacons Youth Leadership Camp Retreat, and leads staff training workshops. In a partnership with the Minnesota Youthwork Institute, Minneapolis BCS developed “youth-adult program quality action teams” trained to assess program quality using key indicators of the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) tool of the Weikert Center. They also develop a “youth-friendly” mini-observation tool based on the YPQA to conduct observations and use collected data to identify and inform areas of improvement. Minneapolis BCS have recognized that staff alone cannot achieve quality improvement efforts without vital student voice.

Youth are engaged in citywide evaluation efforts as well. Minneapolis collects data through an annual evaluation assessing academic achievement, school connectedness, and capacity for productive adulthood. In partnership with the school district, BCS track youth via school related indicators such as school attendance, achievement data, and demographics. Youth are asked to give feedback through an annual survey, focus groups, and regular reflection opportunities with staff. Staff met with key partners including the principal and school staff, youth groups such as the youth advisory, and other partners to plan together using the data to inform practice.

San Francisco Systems Level Integration

The San Francisco Beacon Initiative has created a Beacon Steering Committee (BSC) composed of representatives from the Department for Children, Youth and Their Families (DCYF), the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), Private Foundations (led by the Haas Jr. Fund), Beacon Community-Based Organization representatives, and BCS youth alumni. This Committee meets monthly and collaborates on substantive issues that support the quality and sustainability of the BCS initiative in their city.

In 2010, Beacon Steering Committee partners, led by DCYF and SFUSD, created a collaborative request for proposals (RFP) for Beacon core funding. This RFP established a shared vision, shared goals, and accountability measures between the diverse entities that fund BCS. As part of the RFP process, site-level leaders were asked to mirror the same collaborative spirit, intentionality, and focus at each Beacon Community School that systems leaders had demonstrated in the making of the proposal. Principals and CBO teams were asked to co-create their BCS's three-year proposal for funding, showing intentional integration of city, district, and private funds toward a joint mission. The RFP culminated in an interview process whereby each School Principal and CBO team was asked to present their collaborative vision and plan to BSC members to obtain BCS core funding. This process has nurtured bold and creative school-CBO partnerships in Beacon Community Schools across San Francisco reduced duplication of services, territoriality, and the unnecessary waste of resources which has led to a much more efficient and effective use of resources to support low-income families across the city. In addition, the BSC has also:

- Created joint policies (including blended funding guidelines),
- Promoted awareness and alignment around grant requirements from multiple funders
- Created a move towards shared data systems and
- Engaged in joint planning around SFUSD summer and supplemental funding from the state. Centers through our Kaiser Permanente partner. BSC has even leveraged a bus to meet transportation needs of one of the Beacon Centers

Currently, the group is taking its work to the next level by engaging in collaborative strategic planning and communication efforts; greatly increasing the visibility and viability of the BCS initiative in the city. In addition to the steering committee, SFBI recently launched a Beacons Leadership Team composed of youth and staff from all BCS sites. This group is designed to give input on issues related to BCS and youth issues in the city. Partnerships between youth and adults, private and public funders, schools and CBOs, so essential to BCS, are modeled at the highest level in San Francisco.

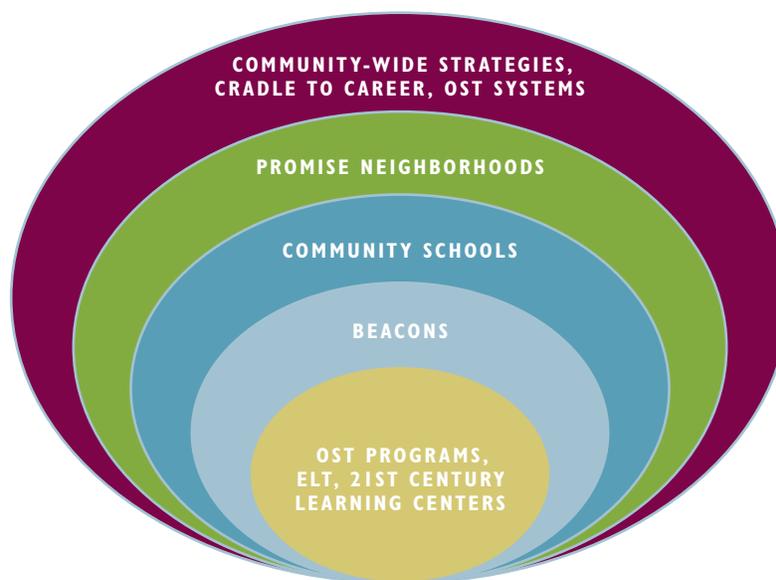
Beacon Community Schools in the Current Out of School Time Policy and Education Reform Climate

Differentiating between the many initiatives across the landscape of education reform and out-of-school time models can be daunting. With their rich history, deep roots and current breadth, where do Beacon Community Schools fit with current initiatives like Expanded Learning Time, 21st century schools, municipal OST initiatives, Promise Neighborhoods, and community wide strategies such as Strive, P20 and Cradle to Career? The primary purpose of the following section is to illuminate the potential for integration of Beacons and other OST and education reform initiatives. Beacon Community Schools can provide the infrastructure through which these other initiatives can thrive.

Overview

BCS are a vital way to actualize the aims of a variety of out-of-school time and place-based initiatives. The image below demonstrates where Beacon Community Schools fit in the complex landscape of education and out of school time policies:

BEACON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLACE-BASED INITIATIVES



Beacons are a type of community school model in which ELT, 21st Century Learning Centers, and OST programs can be, and in many parts of the country are, embedded. These are a vital component of the promise neighborhood strategy that, in turn, can be seen as a critical component of larger community-wide strategies. The descriptions below explore the ways in which BCS can and have been integrated with ELT, OST, 21st Century Learning Centers and Promise Neighborhoods in more detail:

EXPANDED LEARNING TIME

The Center for American Progress defines Expanded Learning Time (ELT) as a school engaged in lengthening the “school day, school week or school year for all students” with the purpose of “[focusing] on core academics and enrichment activities to enhance student success” (Rocha, 2007).

INTEGRATION

A 2012 Afterschool Alliance publication, *Principles of Effective Expanded Learning Programs: A Vision Built on the Afterschool Approach*, highlights key features of expanded learning models, many of which are present in BCS around the country. The first principle, that “strong partnerships between community organizations and schools are at the core of successful expanded learning programs... characterized by alignment of goals and services, effective lines of communication, and data and resource sharing,” is reinforced through BCS models by the primacy of a Community-Based organization serving as the lead for the out-of-school time coordination. Another element is diverse, prepared staff. The longevity of BCS and emerging models for supervision and ladders of leadership have aided in the development of a skilled and diverse workforce for ELT programs. Additional principles present in ELT programs include youth and parent engagement, intentional programming, and ongoing assessment and improvement; all of which are key strategies of the BCS that are outlined in this document.

21ST CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS

21st Century Community Learning Centers aim to:

- Provide opportunities for academic enrichment and tutorial services
- Offer students a broad array of additional services, programs, and activities to reinforce and complement the regular academic program; and
- Offer families of 21st CCLC students' opportunities for literacy and related educational development.

(Excerpt from Title IV, Part B of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001)

INTEGRATION

BCS across the country have the existing infrastructure for actualizing the goals of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers. Many BCS receive 21st Century funding to support their work within schools. In fact, the BCS initiative in Denver has been supported for years by 21st Century dollars. This continues to result in improved academic performance, connection to school and achievement motivation, improved school attendance, and increased self-confidence and pro-social skills (DPS, 2011).

OUT-OF- SCHOOL-TIME INITIATIVES

Out-of-school time (OST) programs and activities occur afterschool, on evenings and weekends, and during the summer. These activities are housed in various locations, both in schools and in the community. They provide youth with an opportunity to develop academic and other skills in a wide range of domains by offering high interest activities. (American Youth Policy Forum, 2006)

An Out of School Time (OST) system is a sustainable, citywide coordinated effort bringing together the various OST “players” – city agencies, schools, community groups and others – to make the most effective use of their collective resources (The Wallace Foundation, 2008).

INTEGRATION

OST programs enable BCS to better serve particular age groups. Through a joint request for proposals process in New York City, OST components were woven into a complex and comprehensive range of services, supports and opportunities for all ages that extend until 9 pm and are offered on weekends at the Beacon Community School.

In February 2012, Denver was one of eight/nine cities selected by the Wallace Foundation for the next phase of OST Systems building grantees. This three year grant will provide critical funding (\$750,000 over the full term, with an additional \$250,000 of local matching funds) enabling Denver to create a data platform system and a coordinating entity that will further the work of OST throughout the city. Leaders from the Beacon initiative in Denver were critical in securing this opportunity and will continue to play a pivotal role as this work progresses.

As evident from these examples, the flexibility of the BCS model allows it to respond to community needs and to incorporate other OST programs that are more targeted. BCS offer extant relationships and infrastructure to support municipal and privately funded out-of-school time initiatives in a way that maximizes resources and impact. When a municipality has an OST system, BCS are a vital component of this comprehensive out-of-school time infrastructure.

PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS

The Promise Neighborhood approach recognizes the interconnected nature of the academic, social, emotional, physical, and civic development of young people in the communities in which they live, and utilizes community-based organizations or institutions of higher education to engage schools and numerous other community partners (Blank, 2012).

INTEGRATION

BCS and their larger community school umbrella can be seen as a vital component of a promise neighborhood strategy. The promise neighborhood, place-based approach would ideally include a type of Beacon community school as a centerpiece of its strategy. In 2011, five out of 20 Promise Neighborhood Grantees were California-based, each using a community school approach (Blank, 2012). Similarly, one of the primary examples of integrating Beacons into the Promise Neighborhood is the Harlem Children's Zone in New York City. Harlem Children's Zone currently has two Beacons as a part of their zone approach.

As evidenced by the descriptions above, integration of the BCS model is possible and currently exists in many parts of the country. The flexibility of the Beacon Community School model allows it to encompass, fit within and complement other initiatives. The longevity of the BCS model has produced deep relationships and opportunities to leverage resources to support many place-based initiatives. Utilizing extant Beacon infrastructure is often a more economical way to implement a new initiative. In addition, employing community-based organizations as the primary coordinating body offers the possibility of garnering additional private funding to enhance the resources entering the school. The flexibility and resourcefulness of Beacon Community Schools across the country has allowed the model to persist over time and in many parts of the country, innovate even in the midst of vast funding crises.

Conclusion and Next Steps for Beacon Community Schools

Over the last 20 years, the Beacon Community School model has become a vital strategy for system-level change leading to positive youth and community outcomes. In recent years, the need for this work has become increasingly important, as cities face ever growing challenges in building schools and communities where young people will thrive and develop into leaders.

Fortunately, cities with BCS initiatives and those that wish to develop BCS initiatives are in a strong position. These cities have the benefit of access to a wealth of research, lesson learned and best practices that have emerged from two decades of Beacon Community School expansion nation-wide.

In order to maintain and increase the impact of Beacon Community School initiatives, we urge policy makers, funders, municipalities, schools and communities to renew their commitment. The following “potential next steps” have been developed in an effort to guide this process. The steps include suggestions for funding, programming and staff development.

Potential Next Steps:

BUILD ON EXISTING BEACON COMMUNITY SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE: In each city where BCS operate, policy makers and funders should consider the ways in which the existing infrastructure can be used to actualize new school and out-of-school time initiatives.

LAUNCH NEW BEACON INITIATIVES: Cities that do not have BCS initiatives and are looking to increase school engagement, youth engagement and community engagement by leveraging partnerships on multiple levels should consider implementing the BCS model. The launch of any new BCS initiative, however, must be accompanied by investments in quality and capacity-building supports.

PROVIDE FUNDING AND CAPACITY BUILDING FOR LADDERS TO LEADERSHIP: The Ladders to Leadership model has emerged as one of the most promising aspects of the BCS model. Funders and intermediaries should consider supporting the implementation of Ladders to Leadership in all Beacons and should consider supporting capacity building for staff around this model.

PROVIDE FUNDING AND CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SOCIAL GROUP WORK METHODOLOGY: Social group work methodology is a way to promote individual development and social change in the context of the group experience. A melding of social work and youth development practices, this methodology aligns well with the philosophy and aims of BCS. Funders and intermediaries should consider supporting capacity building for staff around this methodology.

GATHER YOUTH INPUT THROUGH BEACONS: Youth in BCS are primed and ready to share their input on city-wide initiatives/policies that impact young people in their communities. Municipalities should consider using the BCS infrastructure to tap into this important resource.

CONDUCT FURTHER RESEARCH ON BEACONS: Funders and intermediaries should generate research across the national BCS initiative related to:

- Creating outcomes and indicators of success measured across all cities for young people, adults and communities
- Collecting data on the relationship between program quality and youth and community engagement
- Creating a longitudinal study of Beacon alumni of the Ladders to Leadership program model

SUPPORT THE BEACON COMMUNITY SCHOOL NATIONAL NETWORK: Funders should consider supporting the Beacon Community School National Network to ensure quality and consistency across cities, design and implement research studies, document and disseminate promising practices and support innovation, advocacy and sustainability across the network.

MAINTAIN/INCREASE FUNDING FOR BEACONS: Funders and municipalities should consider maintaining sufficient funding for the cost of the model in current cities that have BCS initiatives. ■

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