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AFTER SCHOOL POLICY IN THE STATE OF MICHIGAN

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Young people spend just 20 percent of their waking hours in school. Nationwide, 28 million children between the ages of 6 and 17 have parents who work outside the home. These children need care and supervision before and after school, over the summer, and during school breaks. Often, the supply does not meet the demand, and many of the children are not able to get the care and supervision they need. In fact, lack of funding is causing many school-age programs to reduce services or to shut down completely. The lack of care is not without consequences. This paper examines PA 116, a policy that has had a significant influence on regulating after school program services in the state of Michigan and the impact of tying child day care licensing to after school funding. Three central questions are at the heart of the policy debate surrounding the regulatory oversight of after school programs in the state of Michigan: First, what is the purpose of after-school programs? Second, how do we define and measure quality? Third, how do we structure funding to support after school program services? These questions are explored in depth and the analysis concludes with a set of recommendations regarding the regulation of after school programs in the state of Michigan.

INTRODUCTION

The field of youth development is a unique mix that blends educational, enrichment and developmentally appropriate care. It has no formal home in the government structure, and therefore lacks dedicated policies, funding streams and regulatory oversight. Like the field of early childhood, practitioners are challenged to build support systems for these critical services around the K-12 education budget in an environment characterized by economic instability and categorical funding. Both fields strive to establish themselves as a player in the social service safety net for families. Although the field has become more organized over the past twenty years, youth development is ten years younger than the early childhood movement. Youth advocates would be well advised to

learn from the model that has moved the needle for their first cousins (Pittman et al, 2004). Like youth development, early childhood advocates struggled to detangle contradictory policies, categorical funding streams and fragmented services for children. Over the past two decades, early childhood research has provided conclusive evidence linking program efficacy to positive long term outcomes. Further, research in brain development has suggested that the first three years of life are the most critical and formative years in a persons life. One significant shift in the early childhood movement that increased political standing in the field was the emphasis on program outcomes (child development) rather than focus on the methods of service delivery (childcare). When child advocates were able to speak in this new language, stakeholders became more receptive and more vested in the issue. This has resulted in unprecedented levels of advocacy and investment in early care and education services. I use this example to illustrate a strategy that youth development advocates would be well advised to consider. While the focus of this paper will be on the policies that influence the methods of service delivery (regulation and funding of after school programs), we will begin by looking at the unmet need and the strategy of positive youth development. This brings us closer to answering the first question of this policy debate: what is the purpose of afterschool programs?

Problem Statement 1: Youth today need safe, stimulating places to go after school.

The National Center for Children in Poverty cites that in 2004, over half of our poorest school-age children are home alone afterschool because their parent(s) work outside of the home. A report released by the After School Alliance, "America After 3 pm" reported that in 2004, 14.3 million school-age children take care of themselves after school. During the summer, the average amount of time spent without adult supervision doubles to ten hours a week or more on average. In Michigan, 27% of K-12 youth are responsible for taking care of themselves. More than 15% of K-12 youth in self-care would be likely to participate in an afterschool program if one were available in the community (Fight Crime, Invest in Youth , 2003).

In 2002, the Urban Institute released a study about what happens between the hours between 3 and 6 pm., when so many children are left alone. Young people left unsupervised during these hours are 37% more likely to become teen parents and 47% more likely to use drugs than their peers involved in extracurricular or after school programs. In 2003, Fight Crime, Invest in Kids provided further evidence by citing the hours between 3p.m. and 6p.m. as the peak hours for juvenile crime and experimentation with drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and sex. Indeed, it is during this time that the violent juvenile crime rate triples, and our most vulnerable youth are at even greater risk.

Problem Statement 2: American youth are at risk.

We have all heard the statistics regarding our poorest urban school districts. According to the 2005 Kids Count report by the Annie E Casey Foundation, the number of impoverished children in the United States is on the rise, with nearly thirteen million children in this country living in poverty. The State of Working America claims that at 21.9%, we have the highest child poverty rate in comparison of 19 other wealthy industrialized nations. Research has repeatedly linked generational poverty with negative outcomes for kids. As more of our children struggle to meet their basic needs, the achievement gap between urban and suburban, black and white, rich and poor grows ever wider. In 2003, approximately 80% of Grand Rapids Public School children in grades 1-6 could not read at grade level. The physical and mental health has also continued to deteriorate. According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, the percentage of school-age children aged 12-19 that are overweight more than tripled in the last 30 years, rising from 5 percent to 15.5 percent (2004). Physical education programs have all but disappeared in urban districts, and the Center for Disease Control reported in 2003 that fewer than 74% youth receive adequate and consistent physical activity. Recent surveys suggest a 50% rise in the number of antidepressant prescriptions written for children between 1998 and 2002. The Children's Defense Fund released a snapshot of a day in the life of an American child in 2004, illustrated in Table 1:

Table 1: Each Day in America among All Children (Source: Children's Defense Fund-2004)

4 children are killed by abuse or neglect.
5 children or teens commit suicide.
8 children or teens are killed by firearms.
177 children are arrested for violent crimes.
375 children are arrested for drug abuse.
1,186 babies are born to teen mothers.
2,385 babies are born into poverty.
2,482 children are confirmed as abused or neglected.
2,756 high school students drop out.
4,262 children are arrested.
16,964 public school students are suspended.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families defines positive youth development as, “A policy perspective that emphasizes providing services and opportunities to support all young people in developing a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging, and empowerment.” (2003).

In the 2002 publication *Youth Development in Community Settings: Challenges to Our Field and Our Approaches*, Connell, Gambone and Smith concluded, “Youth policy in the United States historically has been characterized by a fragmented set of programs with no center. No single entity addresses youth issues historically at the national level”

In the late 1980’s and into the early 1990’s, research failed to demonstrate measurable results in program effectiveness. Public funds were used to support deficit-based approaches such as the reduction of drug use, dropout rates and juvenile crime. These approaches did not consider the multiple variables at work in a young person’s life or their environment. The data suggested that policy expectations needed to be lowered and that “social engineering had its limits.”

In the mid 1990’s, the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research began to release youth resiliency studies and applied research findings from the adolescent development field. Search Institute developed the 40 internal and external assets every young person should have and demonstrated that when the number of assets increase, the number of risk behaviors decrease. This convergence of evidence provided a new language for approaching youth development work. The ideology of positive youth development focused on asset building vs. deficit reduction. Coupled with substantive findings on program impacts, the movement gained both momentum and standing in the policy and practitioner communities.

In 2002, the nonpartisan National Academy of Sciences released a landmark report entitled *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*. This report encompassed findings from a two-year study conducted by the Academy’s Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth. Edited by Jacquelynne Eccles and Jennifer Appleton Gootman, the publication reframed the movement of youth development by concluding that when eight characteristics are consistently present in community programs, youth make gains in positive development. These characteristics, outlined in Table 2, was monumental for the field, because for the first time, a set of measurable conditions was validated and connected to positive developmental outcomes in youth. The characteristics draw upon knowledge learned through published research from scholars and practitioners (e.g. American Youth Policy Forum, 1997; Benson, 1997; Connell et al., 2000; Dryfoos, 1990; Gambone and Arbretton, 1997; Lipsitz, 1980; McLaughlin, 2000; Merry, 2000; Roth and

Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Zeldin et al., 1995). Further, the developmental indicators incorporate the findings gathered through literature reviews of the *Handbook of Child Psychology, Annual Reviews* for psychology, sociology and anthropology.

Table 2: The Eight Characteristics of Positive Youth Development (Source: National Academy of Sciences-2002)

1. Physical and psychological safety
2. Clear and consistent structure and appropriate adult supervision
3. Supportive relationships
4. Opportunities to belong
5. Positive social norms
6. Support for efficacy and mattering
7. Opportunities for skill building
8. Integration of family, school and community efforts

In the 2002 publication, “Finding Out What Matters for Youth: Testing Key Links in a Community Action Framework for Youth Development,” Michelle Gambone, Adena M. Klem and James P. Connell conducted methodologically rigorous research on connecting positive youth development outcomes with early adult outcomes. This provided conclusive evidence that when certain conditions were in place for youth entering and finishing high school, early adult indicators of success could be directly linked to the presence of these assets in adolescence. This would provide the after school funding and policy making community with an answer to the questions, “How do we know this approach works? How can we justify that this is a sound investment?” The extensive literature review included a comprehensive search of medical, public health, education, psychology, and sociology databases using 6 search engines. 500+ studies were reviewed and considered as the framework and threshold indicators were being developed. The research team accessed two longitudinal data sets from 1983 and 1991 University of Michigan studies that tracked developmental indicators for close to 4000 youth from 5th grade through early adulthood. The findings provided scientific evidence as to the optimal levels, or the tipping point, where long term positive impact occurred.

The most compelling takeaway from Gambone’s research lies in one simple fact: we must begin teaching, promoting and measuring quality in after school programs. Now that a quality formula existed, the question became, “how do we bridge the divide between research and practice in an integrated, systemic way?”

Nationally, research in the field today continues to center around quality in research, practice and evaluation. In fall 2005, RAND Corporation released a comprehensive literature review financed through the Wallace

Foundation entitled *Making Out of School Time Matter: Evidence for an Action Agenda*. Relevant issues in the field today include more effectively articulating of the demand for program services, the definition of program quality and evaluating program offerings. In addition, researchers and practitioners continue to seek strategies to encourage participation and build community capacity for program sustainability. Prominent researchers on youth development like Deborah Vendell and Reed Larson are exploring questions on participation levels, dosage, and program structures that promote youth engagement in various age groups. C.S. Mott Foundation has supported research for a longitudinal Study of Promising After-School Programs. The Forum for Youth Investment, with support from the William T. Grant Foundation, convened a stakeholder meeting in May 2005. During this meeting, Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) was unveiled by the High/Scope Foundation. The YPQA is a psychometrically sound instrument that measures the supports and opportunities youth receive in programs. This marks a significant advancement for the field in terms of measuring program quality and organizational efficacy. Currently, 15 assessment tools to measure quality have emerged and are in process of validation. This trend illustrates the increased pressures on programs to perform or lose funding, and moreover, suggests a readiness for the quality conversation to advance and bridge the gap between theory and practice (Yohalem et al 2005).

Michigan has been a leader in the national conversation on quality. In 2003, Michigan passed the “Model Standards” for after school programs. In 2003, the Michigan After School Initiative (MASI) was created through bipartisan legislation and 70 organizations representing education, child advocacy and law enforcement. The initiative is focused on increased interagency coordination as it related to funding, program quality and child outcomes. A partnership was established with the High Scope Foundation to develop an assessment tool to measure the Michigan Model Standards of Quality Care in after school programs.

In 2004, the Michigan Department of Education’s Early Childhood Division mandated that any programs receiving funding for before and after school programs would now be held to the mandates of PA 116 (day care licensing standards) or risk losing public funding. This was not new legislation, but it was the first time it was enforced, and so school districts around the state began to scramble to meet the regulatory guidelines. Districts were given one year to comply or funding would be rescinded.

In early 2005, the state was ready to pilot the assessment tool developed by High Scope Foundation. They conducted program quality audits using High/Scope Foundations YPQA instrument. The YPQA integrates the Michigan Model Standards of Care, the eight indicators of positive youth development and the optimal levels of supports and opportunities. While the partnerships have been advantageous, Michigan is still at an infancy stage in

measuring quality in practice and the two regulatory tools in place that evaluate after school program quality in existence to date is licensing regulations and the YPQA.

FUNDING FOR AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

The third question in the policy debate is how to structure funding streams that support positive youth development in after school settings. One must first understand how the funding is currently structured in order to make substantive recommendations. Currently, the largest federal funding stream supporting after school programs is the 21st Century Learning Center Grants. This funding stream has grown from \$13 million in 1997 to \$1 billion in 2002, and can be traced to efforts to provide greater academic and social supports to students attending low performing school districts. President Bush re-authorized the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CLC) program under Title IV, Part B, of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Congress appropriated \$993.5 million in FY 2003 to operate CLC's in 6900 rural and inner city school districts and 1420 communities. Dollars funnel through DOE and allocated by each State Education Association (SEA), grants are renewable from 3-5 years. Perhaps because of the parallels between the early childhood and youth development movements, administration for this project resides within the Early Childhood Division of MDE. Congress has authorized \$2.5 billion for 21st Century Community Learning Centers annually through FY 2007, but the gap between the appropriations and the authorized amount grows ever wider. The battle over sustaining these funds has been fierce, with a recommended \$400 million (40%) cut to the program in 2004. Fortunately, advocates fought and succeeded in having the funds restored in the budget.

Several other federal and state funding streams finance school-aged childcare, including the Department of Education, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Justice. In Michigan, the Department of Human Services (DHS) is the largest funder of childcare for children under age five, and MDE is the largest funder of childcare for school-aged children. The Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) provide \$20 billion in support to low income families. These funding streams channel from HHS to the state and local social service agencies, allowing for maximum flexibility and discretion in supporting child welfare within each state. Some of these funds are used to support after school programs in the form of school-aged childcare. In addition to discretion in the investment of funds, the states also receive discretion in oversight of funds. In the state of Michigan, "after-school" is defined as a school-aged childcare and therefore subject to the current regulatory systems that exist to oversee and monitor childcare services.

In addition, many national, regional and local foundations support youth program services. According to a report by the Foundation Center, foundation giving to child and youth programs more than doubled between 1996 and 2001, an increase from \$2.09 billion to \$4.46 billion. While the trend is a positive one, it should be noted that foundations account for a small percentage of overall funding for after school programs, and that this figure represents a combined investment of children and youth programs. Interestingly, three of the top fifteen children and youth funders in the study were based in Michigan.

REGULATION AND OVERSIGHT

Background on the 2002 Amendments of PA 116 and HR 26

Prior to Public Acts 695 and 696 of 2002, all Michigan childcare centers and programs operated by public school districts were regulated under Public Act 116 of 1973, the Child Care Licensing Act. The Department of Consumer and Industry Services (CIS) a division of Department of Human Services (DHS), was responsible for licensing administration and oversight. They had reported that over 1,500 buildings within our public schools have received a license to provide childcare, but this represented less than 40% of the school-aged childcare programs delivered in our public schools.

Since 1980, in order to assist local districts in customizing and delivering services to children of all ages before and after school, CIS routinely granted variances from the regulatory oversight that early childhood centers were subjected to in order to meet licensing requirements. In fact, there was no enforcement for licensing school aged child care, and districts continued to receive funds to run after school programs. Beginning in FY2000, the funding for 21st CLCC was administered through the early childhood division of MDE, and pressure was placed on CIS to enforce licensing with for school aged child care. There were several reasons for this, including the potential to leverage millions in child care reimbursement funds as well as providing continuity within the various funding streams that supported after school programs. The political battle continued over enforcing licensing regulations and providing oversight for these programs. CIS did not have the internal capacity to meet the increased demand of licensing school based programs. In the late 90's, the former director of CIS restructured the licensing division, replacing regionally based licensing consultants with random consultants that conducted unannounced inspections. Providers of care, and two influential child advocacy interest groups, Michigan Association of 4C's and Michigan Association of the Education for Young Children (MAEYC), objected, and the previous structure restored. By 2002, 40% of the staff was laid off, including the former director. At one point, there was a 1-2 year backlog between the time of license application submission and actual license inspection. Meanwhile, MDE was applying political pressure to comply with the legislative guidelines on school

aged care and CIS did not possess the staff or systems in place to comply. The former director of CIS granted exemptions to several districts, which were later challenged when a new director that was philosophically aligned with MDE came on board and restructured in 2003. By 2004, MDE had already given two years of warnings when they announced that licensing regulations would now be enforced. Programs had one year to obtain a child day care license, and this was the only way they would receive continuation or new government funding for after school programs. CIS continued to grant multiple waivers, particularly for urban school districts unable to meet the environmental health and fire safety regulations. Many of the regulations required facility upgrades that were nearly impossible for poor districts to implement, yet districts were still required to submit waiver requests or detail plans for full compliance (and a significant capital investment), or become ineligible for millions of dollars in state and federal funding. There were also minimum education levels that required staff to have a degree in early childhood, even though the staff might be running a middle school program. Simply, many of the regulations did not apply to a school aged population.

School districts and coalitions of nonprofit agencies cited concerns to CIS and MDE, identifying the economic barriers tied to compliance for staffing and facility improvement costs. The options for many urban districts included charging fees to parents, thereby prohibiting access to lowest income families in the greatest need of care, or moving programs out of districts, again denying access to families with limited or no transportation. Stakeholders questioned the relevance of applying these childcare standards to the developmental needs of elementary and middle school aged children. For example, Rule 105b of the childcare licensing regulations states the following: “The center and the parent of a child to be cared for by the center shall sign a placement contract that includes provisions for formula, diapering and toilet training requirements.”

CIS faced growing criticism on the logic behind the facility requirements. If the cafeteria, gymnasium and classrooms are safe for a child during the school day, how can it become unsafe after the final bell rings? Moreover, if indeed it is unsafe, than how do we address this issue on a global scale? It began to appear that MDE was pushing a broader political agenda over the regulatory oversight of schools. For years the early childhood division had submitted to the regulatory oversight of child care, and school aged care provided a venue to advocate for a pre-K through 12 quality agenda. The issue was that the regulations for childcare were too narrow to apply to the school age care.

The increasing pressure on legislators from local community supporters resulted in proposed bipartisan legislation that would establish quality standards of care for before and after school programs, and grant circumstantial exemptions from childcare licensing regulations. Public Act 695 (HB 5583) of 2002 amended the Revised School Code and the regulation requirements for

before and after school programs operated by a school district or charter school. PA 695 outlined essential developmental and environmental safety standards for kindergarten to grade eight (K to 8) enrolled in before and after-school childcare programs. In addition, the legislation required the Michigan Department of Education to develop a model for before and after school programs that would further define standards of quality in the areas of human relationships; the indoor and outdoor environments; safety, health, and nutrition; and administration. These standards would serve as the safeguards that educators deemed necessary for extended day and after school programs offered in school buildings. This legislation was the impetus that resulted in the 2003 model standards.

The proposed legislation was tie-barred to Public Act 696 (HB 5584) which amended PA 116 of 1973, The Child Care Licensing Act. Public Act 696 revised the Child Care Organization Act “to allow facilities or programs for school-age children, operated at a school by a public school or by a person or entity with whom a public school contracts for services, request an exemption from the regulatory requirements of PA 116.” In essence, PA 696 expanded the number of programs held to different standards of quality than those placed upon childcare centers. This legislation provided an avenue to exempt school aged care from onerous licensing requirements and regulatory oversight by CIS. Because the bills were tie-barred, this ensured that neither would become law unless the other also was enacted. Beginning July 1, 2003, programs that met the following criteria were eligible to apply for exemptions:

Criteria 1: The program/facility must possess a current license or approval.

Criteria 2: The program must have been in operation and licensed or approved for a minimum of four years prior to the exemption request.

Criteria 3: During the four years preceding the exemption request, there must not have been substantial violations of the Act, or administrative rules.

Criteria 4: The school board or board of directors must have adopted a resolution supporting the application for exemption.

While in theory the legislation eased the burdens of licensing oversight, the reality was that a program had to already be licensing to qualify for an exemption, so it helped few, if any, providers of after school programs. There was still major work to be done to avoid the gridlock of two administrative agencies responsible for sharing regulatory and fiscal oversight. The tension may have played a factor in the April 2003 adoption of House Resolution No. 26. It reads: “Resolved by the House of Representatives, that we request the Michigan Department of Education and the Family Independence Agency (now known as Department of Human Services) to convene and co-chair a task force, to be known as the Michigan After-School Initiative, to develop a plan to ensure quality after-school programs for every school-aged child in the state.”

The goals of MASI included completing a needs assessment, presenting research-based best practice model programs, and developing an implementation plan for the Governor and Legislature by 12/15/03. The implementation plan outlined funding streams and policy recommendations to provide the necessary structure and coordination to deliver academic, social and emotional outcomes for children. Highlights of policy and legislative recommendations included establishing a jointly funded position to oversee MASI, using MDE and DHS funds, establishing a youth development budget, and restructuring funding streams to provide sustainable dollars for all child care. The two agencies agreed to fund a MASI coordinator and direct \$5 million in funds for after school programs in FY 2004-2005.

THE POLICY DEBATE AND POLITICAL MOBILIZATION

Support for the Legislation came from several Public School Districts, the Michigan Association of Adult and Community Education, the Michigan County Social Services Association, the Michigan Association of School Administrators and the Michigan Association of School Boards. Those in favor of the legislation that amended PA 116 wanted recognition for the vastly different developmental needs of children in school-aged childcare. The legislation provided structural guidelines for school aged care, which was an improvement over noncompliance and disregard of quality standards. Interestingly, the Department of Consumer and Industry Services supported this legislation. One might assume that a regulating body would not advocate for *less* regulation and oversight. However, the political landscape at the time of this legislation was tenuous at best, and the capacity of the agency limited.

There has been strong support for licensing as a basic standard of quality within MDE, as well as opposition for the legislation. However, MDE does realize that some of the early childhood licensing standards do not apply to school aged care, and they are still working to revise licensing standards so they are more applicable to after school programs.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) provides funding for school-aged childcare through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) fund and oversees the childcare reimbursement program for licensed providers. The implications of this legislation are significant for DHS; in particular as it pertains to Michigan's formula based childcare reimbursement system. Will exempted sites be eligible for childcare reimbursements? What type of resources (human and financial) will be required to monitor compliance? These will be highly debated questions. Interestingly, DHS was quiet at the time of this legislation and did not voice a strong position for or against, likely because of the other administrative issues at hand.

Opposition was voiced by the League of Women Voters, the Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children (MAEYC), the Michigan 4C

(Community Coordinated Child Care) Association and the Michigan School Age Care Alliance. MAEYC expressed concern that the standards outlined in the bills were incomplete, failing to address no less than 32 sections of the Child Care Licensing Act in the initial introduction. They believed that the health and safety needs of young children would not be met under this legislation. In addition, they expressed concern over the lack of oversight from the state. Indeed, the quality standards that were to be developed by MDE would not be mandated, at least initially. The question remained: how would the state regulate quality?

The League of Women Voters also expressed concern over the proposed legislation. By exempting certain programs from licensing, we risked lowering standards for all childcare. They stressed the importance of a common set of standards for all types of childcare, yet noted concerns over the fragmentation that would occur if multiple state agencies provide oversight on different sets of standards.

There is a stigma attached to the field of childcare. Advocates have long fought to have a voice at the table and standing within the political and business communities. The concern from opponents of this legislation is that it may very well serve to dismantle the years of effort around professionalizing the field of early childhood care and education. With well-documented research on brain development, we have increased the focus on the critical years from birth to five, and heightened the demand for quality care in the earliest years. From the perspective of many early childhood advocates, the creation of alternative standards for after school programs will only compromise the progress made over the years.

The childcare and youth development communities have quite a network that proved to be a mobilizing force. Prior to the introduction of the legislation, MDE received \$21 million in federal funds to support local 21st Century Community Learning Centers (school-aged childcare) for FY2003. As the competition opened up to school districts around the state, the poorest urban districts faced the greatest barriers in achieving the requirement for licensing. Mott Foundation, Michigan Association of United Ways, Fight Crime, Invest in Kids and the Expanded Learning Opportunities Initiative placed continuous pressure on our Representatives in both the House and Senate. The coalition leveraged their partnerships, presented substantive data and illustrated the bias in funding competitions that penalize poor inner-city districts. The kids in greatest need of these funds were unable to access the funds. The government agency that is responsible to improve academics could not reach the kids in greatest needs without adjusting the system. Although MDE was still pushing licensing as a requirement for consideration of funding, the poorest school districts did indeed receive the majority of 21st Century Funds in that cohort.

The greatest strength of the advocacy efforts was the common sense approach. No rational human being would expect to see a diapering schedule at

a middle school program site! From a pragmatic perspective, this legislation makes sense. Who can argue with poverty, safety and helping children learn to read and write? The greatest weakness of the efforts was the lack of connectedness between the school aged and early childhood care groups. There is a strong interdependence between the fields of youth development and childcare and yet they are all too often polarized. Ultimately, both fields want quality care for kids. Perhaps neither group is able to see the forest through the trees, and then the scarcity mentality takes over all sense of reason! Further and of greater concern is the absence of agreement on the purpose and philosophy of after school programs by key stakeholders. As Halpern states in *After-School Programs for Low-Income Children: Promise and Challenges*, “Perhaps the most basic challenge facing the field of after-school programs for low income children is that of articulating a reasonable purpose and role in children’s lives.” (1999).

State legislators understand the value of after school programs, as evidenced by House and Senate resolutions introduced to Congress in 2003, urging lawmakers to restore the proposed \$400 million funding cut to 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants. PA 116 brought attention to the regulatory systems of after school care. House Resolution 26 created MASI, which is working to ensure that every child in Michigan has access to quality after school programs! The most powerful advocates are the beneficiaries of the program:

“A lot of inner city kids don’t get the same opportunities as the kids with money. When these kids come to after school they get a chance to play on a team with kids from all different races and backgrounds. They get a sense of belonging that they normally would not get. It would be a far better investment of our time and resources to develop more centers and activities to prevent our children from failing than to invest in the consequences of their failures. If I did not have after school, I would not have the same guidance I have now. I could be out selling drugs, stealing, and/or committing other crimes. I am not, though. Instead I am an honor’s student on my way to Western Michigan University to major in elementary education, with a full ride scholarship.”

Jessica, 17, testifies before Policy Makers at KidSpeak 2003

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The greatest outcome of the policy work to date around after school care is the focus and attention it has brought to defining the central questions around purpose, quality and funding streams for program services. A development that occurred at the federal level in early 2004 was the release of the Final Report of the White House Task Force on Disadvantaged Youth. The report calls for significant changes in how Washington evaluates and funds youth programs, and could form the basis for legislative and administrative

changes in the coming years. Recognizing the potential systems overhaul that may occur, there are viable recommendations that should be considered for the state of Michigan in the interim:

Coordination

Recommendation: Implement the MASI recommendations outlined in the 2003 Report, to include the funding of a coordinator that will connect the dots between state departments and funding sources, develop a statewide after school network, recommend policy that supports and sustains effective practices in the field. An example of an effective statewide after school network is the Illinois After school Partnership, created in May 2003 by the Illinois General Assembly. Three work groups were established, including a policy group, a capacity building group and an outcomes group. West Michigan has an initiative called the Expanded Learning Opportunities that has been instrumental to developing standards, outcomes, financial models and recommending legislation that supports after school programs in our public schools. These types of coalitions set the stage for future local and state investment by bringing key stakeholders together. As we develop infrastructures to support local and statewide after school initiatives, legislative and executive representatives strengthen their position to act when resources become available. In addition, coordination must occur within the early childhood and after school care networks, as both coalitions are on a parallel course and have opportunities to coordinate and leverage resources that will benefit the whole.

Actions: In 2004 MASI was renamed MASP (Michigan After School Partnership). A coordinator for the initiative was hired in the final quarter of 2005 and renewed for 2006. In November 2005, the House passed the **Federal Youth Coordination Act**. The bill establishes a Federal Youth Development Council to improve communication among federal agencies serving youth, assess the needs of the nation's youth, set goals for helping them, and expand effective programs. Action on the measure is pending in the Senate.

Regulation

Recommendation: Create consistent expectations that apply to all school based after school programs. This would raise the quality of programs, build a more cohesive provider network, and contribute to more effective staff training. What follows are a few suggestions on regulatory models. Revise the child care licensing regulations to eliminate items only relevant to pre-K child care programs, incorporating the Michigan Model Standards for Out of School Programs. Grant fire inspection variances to all before and after school, summer and weekend programs delivered in public schools that are operating and delivering school day instruction to K-12 students. Seriously consider legislation that will expand the school day regulations to include before and after school care, pre school programs and all day kindergarten. This would eliminate duplicative efforts and reduce fragmentation between systems and services.

Actions: On 11/10/05, Public Act 202 of 2005 (HB 5110) was signed into law by Governor Granholm. This law amends the language in PA 116, further defining school age care and providing a means for existing programs to apply for exemption from the act. The legislation, in effect beginning summer 2006, provides local control and oversight, but does not eliminate the licensing regulation for school districts, or the mandate tie barring licensing with funding. After school programs that serve children less than 13 years of age are required to be licensed through the Child Care Organizations Act. After school programs must be licensed and after two years of being in good standing they can apply for deemed status. Deemed status will exempt programs from interim licensing inspections, allowing them to instead submit documentation of compliance through local after school standards of quality. The Act exempts school-based programs serving youth older than 13 years and excludes youth clubs, scouting, and school-age recreational or supplemental education programs. In addition, Grand Rapids Public Schools licensed 110 after school program classrooms for child day care by 6/30/05 and secured the \$4 million in state support. Many schools in the state are still struggling to get licensed and under threat of losing their 21st CLCC funding.

Funding

Recommendation: Develop a broad philosophical agreement on the purpose and scope of after school programs. Engage in bipartisan and interagency cooperation on administration, outcome measurement, legislation and dedicated funding streams. In Rhode Island, the Starting Right initiative brought key stakeholders together to focus on child care systems improvement. One goal of the initiative was to expand programs for school-aged and older youth. The legislation that created Start Right also raised the age limit for child care reimbursements from 12 to 16, increasing the number of after school programs eligible for public funding.

Actions: The appropriations for 21st CLCC were reduced to \$991.1 million for FY 2005. Congress is expected to complete the 21st CLCC budget for Fiscal Year 2006 in the next two weeks. Although the 2006 Fiscal Year began on October 1, the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Departments are currently operating on Continuing Resolutions, at last year's funding levels. The current Continuing Resolution will expire on December 17, 2005. On November 16, House and Senate conferees came to an agreement on the appropriation, which will hopefully leave the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) operating at the same funding level as last year. Although this is much less than the authorization levels agreed to in the No Child Left Behind Act, the 21st CCLC initiative would be spared the cuts that many education programs have faced. The goal is to minimally maintain Fiscal Year 2005 funding levels for all of Fiscal Year 2006. MASP did manage to

leverage additional funds, but less than the anticipated \$5 million as a result of a budget shortfall in the state of Michigan.

CONCLUSION

The problem facing youth development advocates is that the field is not recognized through dedicated policies, funding streams or regulatory oversight. The challenge before policymakers and planners is how to build seamless and comprehensive health and human service support systems around K-12 education in an environment characterized by economic instability and categorical funding. In a recent survey at Grand Rapids Public Schools, teachers overwhelmingly agreed that the number one priority for after school programs was education, while youth development providers argued that the primary purpose of these programs was enrichment, and the majority of parents used the services for childcare. Here we have a classic example of competing values, where clearly a stronger outcome would emerge from an approach that would recognize after school as the method of service delivery, and youth development as the outcome of program services. Unfortunately, policies often serve to magnify these polarities vs. bridge the divide. While PA 116 does measure standards of quality, the legislation was initially designed to regulate early childhood care. Therefore, many of the regulations are inapplicable and the process to obtain waivers and exemptions is burdensome on a large urban school district.

The most pivotal resource constraints faced by most after school programs include funding, staffing and facilities. All three of these variables significantly influence levels of quality. By administering the funds through the early childhood division, licensing facilities has become the goal, to the exclusion of other measures of quality. The resource demands of licensing risks taking the focus away from other priorities needed to deliver quality programming; resources that support highly trained staff, meaningful program opportunities, low student/teacher ratios and build the systemic infrastructure necessary for sustainability. Yet, licensing is the best and only measure of quality that exists within the current system. Many communities are ahead of the state and pushing on MDE to redefine appropriate measures of quality for school aged care. As the field moves forward, three central questions will remain at the heart of the policy debate: First, what is the purpose of after-school programs? Second, how do we define and measure quality? Third, how do we structure funding to support program services. Without clarity on these questions, funding streams and services for youth will continue to remain fragmented and unstable, and regulatory systems will be insufficient and burdensome on cash strapped urban school districts. Stakeholders would be well advised to apply the public administration principles of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, budgeting and evaluating

when employing strategies and solutions to address future policies for youth in the state of Michigan.

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