



## **Building Links and Ladders: Connecting the After School Community and the Community Colleges**

**The Afterschool Community and the California Community Colleges are natural partners in building a high quality afterschool workforce to meet the expanding need for afterschool workers in California.** Both institutions are devoted to education and personal development. Community colleges are local institutions with scale and capacity in nearly every region of the state; afterschool programs face unprecedented demand for new employees in the coming expansion. While the colleges have closer relationships with local school districts, connections between them and the after-school providers have not been as close. **A comprehensive, multi-year strategy to foster collaboration and connection could maximize the potential synergy between the systems.** A phased approach would build on immediate opportunities for addressing the demand for afterschool workers while offering community college students access to meaningful employment that complements the college schedule. As involvement deepens, partnerships between these two critical systems can also harness the potential community colleges hold as a resource for enhancing the professional development and enrichment of the afterschool labor force while connecting community college students to career ladders in a range of occupations, particularly the teacher training pipeline. The connection to college-going culture would also be of great benefit for the youth in afterschool programs.

**Building the links between these systems, as well as the career ladders to further advancement for students and incumbent after school workers, can be conceptualized in terms of increasing levels of involvement, structure and benefits.** While all can be worked on concurrently, it is useful to consider how a phased strategy can systematically build longer term and more enduring connections between these two systems to their mutual benefit and that of their larger communities.

### **I. BUILDING LINKS AND LADDERS**

#### **1. Recruitment of afterschool workers via the community college**

- a. The afterschool field currently reports successful examples of increased numbers of high quality applicants from recruitment efforts that reach out to community colleges
- b. Afterschool work complements well the community college course schedule – and when combined with financial aid, wages earned help create a package supporting post-secondary attendance for community college students
- c. Joint recruitment offers opportunity for the two systems to begin collaboration without large upfront investments and has immediate “payoffs” for both.
- d. Presence of community college students working in afterschool employment models post-secondary attainment for young people enrolled in afterschool programs, while



providing involved community college students affective benefits associated with being a role model for the youth in their community.

- e. The Foundation for California Community Colleges already provides some recruitment services for non-profits using student assistants in their afterschool programs. FCCC has statewide capacity to reach career and student employment centers in all community colleges, as well as CSU and UC.

## **2. Provision of college credit and support via work experience, cooperative education and/or work-study for afterschool employment.**

- a. Work experience and cooperative education programs exist on all community college campuses, and can be used to grant college credit and guided supervision for those working in afterschool programs.
- b. These programs enhance the attractiveness of afterschool employment by adding opportunities to earn college credit to wages, and by providing a structured work experience and professional development opportunity to those involved.
- c. Work experience/co-op education as well as work-study placement partnerships can provide opportunity for the afterschool community and the college to collaborate in the development of relevant programming while providing FTES revenue for colleges.
- d. The provision of college credit for work experience can enhance programs offered in conjunction with local providers, workforce boards and social service agencies.

## **3. Professional development coursework for entering as well as incumbent afterschool employees**

- a. Colleges can collaborate with the afterschool community to develop and offer coursework most relevant to afterschool employment. If offered as relatively few units these would support preparation for, but not constitute a barrier to, afterschool employment
- b. Colleges can quickly and easily build on extant courses in school age care already “on the books” in many community colleges due to inclusion of school age care in the Child Development matrix.
- c. After school employment and coursework could also be incorporated into bridge programs that address foundational skills including math/English/work readiness and career guidance designed to link underprepared youth and adults to college and career (as piloted in Contra Costa). This can enhance the preparation of the afterschool worker and provide realistic opportunity for students to combine part-time work and accelerated, intensive basic skills education.
4. To be effective, such curriculum and program development would need to involve after school personnel in curriculum and program development. As subject matter experts in afterschool programming, they might also serve as adjunct faculty for college courses.
  - a. The afterschool employers would inform the development of needed competencies, the larger afterschool community would have opportunity to contribute their expertise in building the field while the community college would be gaining both FTES and new employer partnerships.



- b. Partnerships and multiple funding streams (such as WIA, social service and FTES) can be mobilized to support students as they enroll in the coursework and seek employment.

**5. Incorporating afterschool work as part of a larger career ladder and creating pipelines to teaching as well as other potential career paths, especially in youth serving occupations.**

- a. Afterschool work experience can be utilized as part of an intentionally designed career ladder that supports students as they build ongoing educational portfolios and career advancement in targeted career pathways. These can be linked to teacher training, related youth-serving occupations, as well as providing general opportunity for career pathway support in other fields. Afterschool employment serves as an internship or tryout employment experience within a larger pathway.
- b. Successful models would incorporate all the elements detailed above as well as being nested within a larger certificate/degree structure and pathway – and for some, especially teaching, would lead to transfer to BA granting institutions.
- c. The programs could be housed in different parts of the community college depending on the discipline structures in the college as well as intended pathway/employment connections.
- d. Such approaches mobilize all involved partners and provide professional development opportunities for the afterschool community, maximize long term student educational achievement and career advancement, and leverage multiple revenue sources.
- e. This approach can simultaneously address state need for addressing critical shortages in afterschool employment and in teaching.
- f. This level of work would also build on and extend partnerships with CSUs and other four year institutions to enable youth access to a full educational pathway.

**II. ENHANCING THE CONNECTIONS, ENRICHING PROGRAMS, LEVERAGING INVESTMENTS**

Beyond the development of the afterschool workforce, there are a range of mutual benefits to colleges and afterschool partnerships that can enhance and extend both systems. Sharing facilities and college resources can potentially enrich the afterschool experience for youth, assist under-resourced programs in offering robust experiences to their youth, connect the college to future students and their communities, and help infuse a culture of college-going into local communities. Most community colleges and local school districts have extensive partnerships, usually focused around curriculum, program alignment and articulation, recruitment and outreach. A few colleges have formal relationships with afterschool programs offered by the school districts.

1. **Some community colleges already offer a range of on campus programs for school age youth** – including such offerings as “College for Kids” or “Kindercaminata.” These programs have a reservoir of experience in addressing joint programming for school age youth.
2. **Community colleges can collaborate with afterschool programs to offer opportunity for personal development and enrichment** as well as previewing the world of potential



careers – including music, dance, theater arts, digital recording and multimedia, physical education, computer and information technologies, gardening and horticulture, science labs, health careers, just to name a few. Sharing or leveraging such resources—including facilities and faculty—for use by youth enrolled in afterschool programs can be explored and supported. Models and examples of such resource sharing can be identified and challenges and benefits illuminated.

3. **Community colleges can incorporate afterschool programs into long term outreach with school age youth**, building the pipeline for future community college students in their communities. Particular disciplines, particularly career technical fields concerned about reaching and recruiting new generations, may be especially interested in such partnerships.

### III. LEVERAGING THE SCALE OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM TO ADDRESS STATEWIDE NEEDS.

The California Community College system, Foundation and state organization provide unique opportunities and strengths in terms of funding, communication, state policy levers, advocacy and partnerships. Ensuring that system deliberations are informed by effective practices, and in turn that effective practices are communicated widely to the field can only be done via a deliberate state strategy. The scale and capacity of the colleges is a real advantage to developing and institutionalizing solutions.

1. **The CCC system has established communication systems** to communicate with the field. These can be utilized to develop awareness of the needs, clarify evolving requirements and qualifications; communicate effective practices or mobilize practitioners regarding educational policy matters.
2. **The system can support and encourage effective after school initiatives** by including after school needs among the priorities for Career Technical, discretionary, or other competitive funding streams.
3. **The system and the foundation already provide some centralized services to the afterschool community via student assistant recruitment, placement and human resource functions.** These mechanisms could be available for expansion or additional functions.
4. The system, the Foundation, the Community College League of California, and other state CC organizations **routinely weigh in on matters of educational policy and practice with the legislature and the Governor's Office.**
5. **The system has established deliberative mechanisms and cooperative arrangements** with the CA Department of Education, UC and CSU, and relevant workforce agencies.

*For more information, go to [www.CareerLaddersProject.org](http://www.CareerLaddersProject.org)*