

Promising Practices in Afterschool

NIOST is one of six national organizations across the country that has been funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation to collect promising practices in afterschool. Each organization collects practices from different geographic areas and program auspices.

NIOST's focus is identifying system building and infrastructure practices from the 20 cities across the country participating in the Cross-Cities Network. Practices are collected on an ongoing basis and are submitted to the AED Center for Youth Development and Policy Research where a review team evaluates the practices to ensure they are valid. Once practices pass successfully through the review process, they are posted to the www.afterschool.org web site so that others may learn from them.

To learn more about the Promising Practices Initiative or to submit your own practice, please visit www.afterschool.org

Or

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Promising Practices in Citywide Afterschool Initiatives

Creating a Successful, Citywide System of Before- and Afterschool Programs

San Diego is the first major city in the United States with comprehensive before and afterschool programs in every public elementary and middle school within its jurisdiction. This “6 to 6” program currently serves both elementary and middle school students in 204 public schools in the city of San Diego. With a strong public endorsement from San Diego’s Mayor, “6 to 6” was able to gain support from major city offices and city leaders, local advocacy groups, the public, and the state government. This support was crucial in both the development and the sustainability of the “6 to 6” initiative.

Factors Leading to the Development of “6 to 6”

In the mid 1990s, the City of San Diego was feeling the impact of welfare reform. Parents participating in welfare-to-work programs were no longer available to their children during the afterschool hours. San Diego’s Mayor Susan Golding, a single mother, was keenly aware of the importance of childcare. Although the City’s Office of Child Care was building new childcare centers and serving 5,000 kids, it was estimated that welfare reform would affect approximately 50,000 children in the San Diego area. It was clear that the existing system could not keep up with growing demands. During this same time period, there were emerging concerns about student safety in San Diego; juvenile crime and drug use among youth were on the rise.

In response to these concerns, Mayor Golding established the “Safe School Task Force” in 1995. This task force, which provided a vehicle to incubate a vision and garner support for a citywide afterschool initiative, included the Mayor, the San Diego City School Superintendent and Principals, the County Juvenile Court Judge and Probation Officers, the City Manager, the City Attorney, the Chief of Police, and eventually, the City Coordinator of Child Care. The task force met from 1995 to 1998 and developed a clear and unified vision: to provide before- and afterschool services in every public elementary and middle school within the City of San Diego.

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The Mayor made it clear from the onset that before- and afterschool services were necessary for all children and parents, not just low-income families. The majority of contemporary households did not include an “at-home” parent available to children arriving home at 3:00 pm. Thus, before- and afterschool childcare was a necessity for most families, of all income levels. If policies had been based on a deficit model, with government services exclusively for low-income families, the “6 to 6” program could easily have been perceived as a service for “poor kids” and limited to helping one population. Instead, the mayor and the task force recognized the universal benefits of a community-wide vision to: (1) increase community safety; (2) support working parents; and (3) enhance academics.

This inclusive vision resonated with a broad range of constituencies. Schools and child advocates saw the program as a time for extended learning and enrichment opportunities. Parents and city leaders supported the program’s ability to meet the rapidly increasing need for childcare. Businesses supported the program’s potential to strengthen the workforce while law enforcement officials valued the positive impacts on community safety that would come from reduced numbers of unsupervised kids on the streets.

Gaining and Utilizing Public Support

The Mayor strategically promoted the “6 to 6” Program vision early on. The first year of the initiative opened in a flurry of press coverage. Mayor Golding consistently spoke about the “6 to 6” initiative at every opportunity, including each annual city address. Such strong initial promotion generated public attention and enthusiasm around the program which translated into lasting fiscal and legislative support.

Another strong advocate of “6 to 6” was the San Diego Organizing Project (SDOP), a group of Black and Latino churches who organizes around critical

issues impacting their constituents. The SDOP was concerned about the increasing gap in student achievement between low- and high-income students. The SDOP recognized that the “6 to 6” initiative could provide academic enrichment for students who were failing academically.

The Mayor made a commitment to finding necessary program funding if schools agreed to provide facilities at no additional cost; the SDOP was determined to ensure that the Mayor kept her promise. In the early spring of 1998, the SDOP organized a march of 500 parents during a School Board meeting. This march brought the issue to the forefront of the public’s attention. The SDOP and the parents successfully encouraged the School Board to support the initiative and endorse the “6 to 6” vision as an equally balanced academic and enrichment program. Next, the SDOP met individually with each City Council member to lobby his/her support for the Mayor’s request for city funding.

On June 28, 1998, the City Council voted to fund \$1.7 million to the “6 to 6” initiative in 31 schools for the first year of implementation. This significant initial investment demonstrated the city’s commitment and enabled the program to access additional local resources. The strong initial publicity and advocacy created the momentum to ignite and fuel the “6 to 6” initiative. Keeping the vision in the public and private citizen’s radar was critical to program

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expansion.

The Department of Child Care, which was charged with establishing the programs at each of the schools only two months after funding was approved, had strong leadership and experience establishing such systems and responded quickly to the Mayor’s request. Within two months, the Department selected and focused on the 31 schools best positioned to house a “6 to 6” program.

Implementing the Initiative

In order to implement the vision of a citywide before- and afterschool program in San Diego, the city government had to obtain funding, establish a system to manage daily operations and staff, and operate within the legal requirements of the childcare industry. Since funding had been secured, the task force moved to establish a system of management and administration. Both the City and the School District were limited by many of their union contracts which stipulated that the union workers receive higher wages than comparable non-union employees. In order to avoid the union issue, the City's Department of Child Care subcontracted programming to community-based organizations. Since these organizations did not have to negotiate with or employ union employees, programs were established and expanded without delay.

Although the "6 to 6" initiative aimed to improve community safety and access to childcare, the program threatened to dramatically change the already existing childcare industry norms and standards. Private childcare providers were concerned that a city-run, comprehensive, and free program would reduce their revenue stream, replace their pre-existing in-school programs, and possibly decrease established industry standards of service.

The Coordinator of the City's Department of Child Care addressed the issues concerning the existing childcare industry. The Department subcontracted direct services through open bidding to existing industry providers, such as the YMCA. Additionally, the Coordinator also visited other cities across the country to observe successful examples of afterschool programming delivered within school systems. This hands-on research provided her with the facts and tools required to promote a new partnership between San Diego's childcare industry and schools.

The "6 to 6" initiative could not become a citywide program under current restrictive childcare licensing regulations. In order to modify existing regulations, the Coordinator of the Department of Child Care worked to pass new legislation. Legislation AB 181 allowed San Diego's "6 to 6" to operate as a

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licensing-exempt model in schools. This was followed by AB 297 which exempted all afterschool programs from licensing restrictions statewide. Finally, state legislation AB 6 allowed traditional afterschool state funding to support before school programs as well.

Infrastructure

The "6 to 6" Program is a joint partnership between the City of San Diego, San Diego Unified School District, eight local school districts, and fifteen local community-based organizations. Together, these groups operate under a collaborative Memorandum of Understanding wherein the City is designated as the program's fiscal and administrative agent and the school districts are designated as the facilities and instructional agent. Through the Department of Community and Economic Development, the City subcontracts the daily operations and programming of before- and afterschool activities with the fifteen community-based organizations. The San Diego Department of Child Care developed a system for existing community-based organizations to bid on and run programs. Having done so, "6 to 6" benefited from the infrastructure and support of a public bureaucracy while maintaining the flexibility of a community-based organization for day-to-day operations.

The Memorandum of Understanding between the districts and the City also designates each school responsibilities for facilities, food service, site supervision, and academic activities. There is one full-time site supervisor per school who works in the

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school during the day and in “6 to 6” during the extended hours. Lastly, the principal of each school is responsible for working with the site supervisor to select at least two credentialed teachers to work with “6 to 6” students 90 minutes per day, three days a week.

San Diego’s “6 to 6” program combines academic, enrichment, youth development, and community involvement to promote a variety of outcomes for school aged children and youth. Each program must submit a RFP delineating how they are going to meet those goals in a way that is responsive to the age group and community that the school serves. Program monitors from San Diego’s “6 to 6” observe the extended day sites twice a year to ensure that programs are following through with the plans established in their RFPs.

The success of the “6 to 6” initiative is a direct result of the task force’s strategic planning which enabled the program’s vision time to germinate and take root with numerous constituencies. While the program initially aimed at serving those children and youth with the greatest need, it rapidly expanded to serve participants in higher-income communities as well. Today every public elementary and middle school in San Diego has a “6 to 6” program. It was the task force’s well-coordinated and careful upfront work that ensured long-term program investment and sustainability of the “6 to 6” initiative.

Resources:

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