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After Quantity Comes Quality: Defining a Policy Agenda for California Proposition 49-Afterschool Programs

Kindra F. Montgomery

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"After Quantity Comes Quality"
Defining a Policy Agenda for California
Proposition 49-Afterschool Programs

By, Kindra F. Montgomery

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Golden Gate University

Instructor: Jay Gonzalez

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Introduction

In 2002, current governor Arnold Schwarzenegger spearheaded California's Proposition 49, which passed with a 15-percentage point margin of victory in the polls. This was followed by an historic event in 2003, when California voters mounted a recall election of then Governor Gray Davis. By 2004, funding support for afterschool programs swelled to a level that exceeded \$260 million, with the prospect of an approximately \$428 million increase once the Proposition 49 funding trigger goes into effect. The state of California has experienced unprecedented interest and growth in afterschool programs over the past six years.

Through the current disbursement of Proposition 49 funds the California's afterschool community is now poised to shift policy mobilization efforts from issues of quantity to issues of quality. Many California afterschool stakeholders are now moving policy efforts to expand the issue of afterschool quality by creating statewide standardized afterschool program outcomes that embark upon the next wave of afterschool policy mobilization that detail issue of quality. This research paper aims to gather input from afterschool stakeholders that identifies and prioritizes collective issues of quality for California afterschool programs thus creating an inclusive policy agenda for the coming legislative year.

Background

Proposition 49 increases state funding for afterschool programs serving K-9 pupils from approximately \$120 million to more than half a billion dollars. Including the current match of 50% and the federal funds for afterschool, California will have approximately

\$1 billion for after-school programs. Proposition 49 therefore significantly increases the number of children served by ASES and 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st Century) after-school programs from ~230,000 students to ~500,000 students. It will also dramatically increase the number of sites from approximately 1,700 to 4,000¹. In order to continue to effectively operate existing programs as well as to support newly funded programs, it is critical to devise a plan to scale and maintain quality across the state.

California faces significant challenges in the implementation of Proposition 49, including:

- The 50% matching funds required of all grantees, which may be challenging for those most in need :
- The tremendous pressure on existing infrastructure created by the tripling of funds
- The definition and achievement of quality in programs across the state as the system expects to increase from ~1,700 to ~4,000 sites.
- The more than 16,000 well trained and high quality new after-school staff required
- The demand for high quality technical assistance
- The grant approval and disbursement processes

The importance and complexity of implementing Proposition 49 requires the development of a vision and mission that drive the development of an overall afterschool policy agenda: A policy agenda that:

¹ There are 2,035 elementary and middle/junior high schools currently receiving state or federal funding for afterschool, comprising 1,137 ASES-funded schools, and 1,193 21st Century-funded schools with about 300 schools receiving both grants. Therefore there are approximately 1,700 unique K-8 sites. There are 57 high schools receiving 21st Century grants. Current ASES serves less than 135,000 K-8 slots (\$120M/\$900/child/year). Current 21st Century serves about 96,000 slots (\$130M/\$1350/child/day including high schools). On average, the number of students per ASES site is ~125. Projected total number of ASES post-Proposition 49 and 21st Century slots is 503,000 (\$680M/\$1350/child/day) suggesting about 4,024 ASES- and 21st-Century sites ignoring site overlap. Where relevant, assumed reimbursement rate of \$7.50/child/day. Note there are 3,664 eligible ASES schools and 6,738 total number of K-8 schools out of 9,375 CA schools.

- Utilizes and synthesizes the vast knowledge available today
- Outlines short and long term steps for consistent quality and outcomes across the state
- Ensures proper level of financial and infrastructural support in place, including programs, workforce, oversight and administration

The Basic Policy Elements of Proposition 49:

Proposition 49 – Basics

In 2002, California voters passed Proposition 49 to increase the state's investment in after school programming. Prop. 49 more than quadruples funding for after school programs, through the After School Education and Safety (ASES) program, from its current \$121 million to \$550 million.

Senate Bill 638, authored by Senator Tom Torlakson, makes significant improvements to the rules governing ASES and 21st CCLC funding. SB 638 was passed with an urgency clause, so its provisions became effective immediately upon the Governor's signature- September 21, 2006.

Prop. 49 – Effective Date

Prop. 49 funding triggered when state general fund spending (not including spending guaranteed for education under Proposition 98) reached at least \$1.5 billion more than the highest level of non-Proposition 98-guaranteed state general fund spending between 2000-01 and 2003-04. The approved budget for fiscal year 2006-07 includes the \$550 million for ASES through Prop. 49.

Proposition 49/ASES – Eligibility

School districts, county offices of education, and cities or counties partnering with a school district or county office of education will be eligible for ASES funds. Nonprofit organizations may apply in partnership with a school district or county office of education, but cannot serve as the fiscal agent. Programs can be located at schools or approved alternate locations that are accessible to program participants.

Prop. 49/ASES – Funding Priority

Applicants must apply to the California Department of Education (CDE) for ASES funds. CDE will review applications and award grants through the following priority structure:

- *Priority 1:* Current ASES grantees in good standing will receive an increase of 50% of the grant level they were awarded in the 05-06 grant year.
- *Priority 2:* Current 21st Century Community Learning Center grantees, that meet ASES criteria, will be grandfathered into ASES funding at their current funding levels, minus their direct access and family literacy grants.
- *Priority 3:* Schools in which more than 50% of the students are eligible for the free and reduced lunch program.
- *Priority 4:* All other elementary schools and middle schools in the state.
- *Priority 5:* Supplemental grants for summer, intersession, large school, year-round and waiting lists.

Prop. 49/ASES – Program Funding

- Grants are based on \$7.50 per child per day for after school and \$5 per child per day for before school programming for 180 days of the school year.
- Elementary schools are eligible for a maximum of \$112,500 and middle schools are eligible for a maximum of \$150,000 for after school programs. Before school maximums are \$37,500 for elementary schools and \$49,000 for middle schools.
- Grantees may also apply for additional funding for a large school adjustment (for elementary schools with enrollment over 600 and middle schools with enrollment over 900).
- Supplemental funding may be requested for waiting lists, before school, vacation and intersession, or programs operating beyond 180 days (*in the case of year round schools.*)
- The funding is provided as a three year, renewable direct grant.
- Programs must secure 33% of their grant amount in cash or in-kind matching funds. Facilities costs may account for up to 25% of the required match.
- Programs may charge family fees. No one may be turned away for inability to pay.

Prop. 49/ASES – Fiscal

- Grantees are required to report attendance semi-annually.
- Grantees receive 65% of the annual grant amount within 30 days of acceptance of the grant award.
- Grantees will receive 25% after submitting mid-year reports.
- The remaining 10% will be paid when the final year-end reports are received.

Prop. 49/ASES – Grant Application

- The intent of the law is that applications be short and concise.
- All applicants are required to certify they will provide the following:
 - Inclusion of educational and enrichment components.
 - A physically and emotionally safe environment
 - Integration with the core school day
 - Community collaboration
 - Opportunities for physical activity
 - Provision of a nutritious snack
 - Fiscal accountability and availability of required match
 - Program shall meet all evaluation requirements
- Schools with 50% or more students eligible for free and reduced lunch will need to submit FRL participation rates.
- Schools with less than 50% of students eligible for the FRL program need to also submit other indicators of need including neighborhood socioeconomic status, percent of English language learners, and availability of programs in the community.

Prop. 49/ASES – Program Operation

- The program must include an educational and literacy component to provide tutoring and/or homework assistance; and an educational enrichment component, which may include, but is not limited to, recreation and prevention activities.

- All staff members who directly supervise pupils must meet the minimum qualifications of an instructional aide in that school district and school site principals must approve site supervisors.
- The student-to-staff ratio must not exceed 20:1.
- ASES programs must serve a nutritious snack, subject to SB 12 standards.

Prop. 49/ASES – Hours of Operation

- Programs must remain open until at least 6 p.m. and operate for at least 15 hours/week.
- Elementary school programs must enroll students 5 days/week, while programs that serve middle or junior high school students must enroll students for a minimum of 9 hours/week and 3 days/week.

Prop. 49/ASES – Before School Requirements

- Before school programs must operate for a minimum of one and one-half hours/day.
- Programs must begin operation at least 90 minutes before the school day begins.
- Students must attend at least 45 minutes to be counted toward daily attendance.
- Program must offer a breakfast meal.
- Summer school programs operating both before *and* after school must operate at least 4.5 hours.

Prop. 49/ASES – Accountability

- For the purposes of measuring program effectiveness, ASES programs are required to submit annual student outcome data, including:
 - Program attendance,
 - School-day attendance of participating pupils, and
 - A choice among several measures grantees will choose based on their program focus:
 - Positive behavioral changes, as reported by school day or after school teachers
 - STAR program test scores
 - Homework completion rates as reported by the school day or after school teachers
 - Skill development as reported by the school day or after school teachers
 - Additional measures developed by the California Department of Education
- All grantees must review program goals, content and chosen outcome measures every three years and report any changes to CDE.
- All grantees must report STAR results annually, but may choose not to use these results as a measure of effectiveness.
- CDE will provide technical assistance when a grantee fails to:
 - Achieve 75% of its proposed attendance.
 - Demonstrate effectiveness using chosen indicators.

- CDE will reduce grant amounts if a grantee fails to meet 85% of its proposed attendance for two consecutive years.
- CDE may terminate a program for failing for three consecutive years to:
 - Achieve 75% of its proposed attendance goal.
 - Demonstrate effectiveness using chosen indicators.

Prop. 49/ASES – Statewide Evaluation

- CDE must complete and submit a statewide evaluation of the ASES program to the Legislature by October 1, 2011.
- The State Advisory Committee on Before and After School Programs will make recommendations for reporting and evaluation systems by June 30, 2007.
- CDE will forward Advisory Committee recommendations, along with their own, to the State Board of Education by September 30, 2007.
- The State Board of Education will adopt systems by November 30, 2007.

21st Century Community Learning Centers – Program and Funding

- 21st CCLC programs will be subject to the same operating, reporting, fiscal and evaluation requirements as ASES programs.
- 50% of funding is set aside for high school after school programs. High schools may apply for up to \$250,000 per year, per site. Funding is not calculated through daily attendance projections.
- 10% of the funding is for Direct Access and Family Literacy supplemental grants

- The remaining funds will go to elementary and middle school grants, including community based organizations, private schools and other applicants eligible under 21st Century.
- CDE expects the 21st Century application to be released roughly one month after the ASES application is released. The applications will be due back in a 6-8 week timeframe.

Literature Review

In recent years, there has been an increased policy interest in the way youth spend their time afterschool, and in promoting the availability of opportunities for them to spend this time in productive and developmentally supportive ways. Although formal voluntary organizations such as the Scouts, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA, and youth sports clubs have been operating since the 19th and early 20th centuries (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992; Sproul, 1941), current interest has led to increased investment of both public and philanthropic resources and to increased scrutiny of program quality, availability, participation, and impact (Larner et al., 1999).

Afterschool opportunities (such as arts and music programs, sports teams, community service, youth entrepreneurship opportunities, and after-school programs) are increasingly seen as potentially powerful tools to promote positive youth development and to prevent problematic behaviors and poor youth outcomes. On the developmental side, such opportunities are credited with the potential, for example, to enhance school achievement, increase self-confidence, and foster civic responsibility (e.g., Catalano et

al., 1998; McLaughlin et al., 2000; Larson, 2000) and with strengthening a range of physical, intellectual, psychological, and social developmental assets (Eccles and Gootman, 2002; Gambone, Klem and Connell, 2002). On the preventive side, they have been engaged to reduce the incidence of, for example, early pregnancy, substance abuse, and criminal activity (e.g., Kirby and Coyle, 1997; Catalano et al., 1998; Eccles and Gootman, 2002).

With the current passage and release of proposition 49 funds it is now critically important for the California afterschool field to come together and design an afterschool policy agenda that focuses on improving current Proposition 49 legislation to address and include uniform afterschool program quality outcomes. In order to inform policy and practice that seeks to support “quality” afterschool opportunities and outcomes for youth it is essential to gain a sense of key policy issues from the afterschool field. The literature review focuses on:

- What are the research influences in afterschool program quality or content?
- What barriers exist to program quality or content, and how do stakeholders work to overcome these barriers?
- What gaps exist between youth afterschool interests and to program quality or content?
- What do stakeholders expect to get out of creating an afterschool policy agenda, and how is this connected to current literature?

What are the research influences in afterschool program quality or content?

Relatively little research is available that focuses on the determinants of quality afterschool programs. Available research suggests that there are some individual- and

family-level factors associated with participation, such as academic achievement (higher-achieving students are more likely to participate), family socioeconomic status (young people from higher- SES families are more likely to participate), parental endorsement and parental modeling (both being positively related to participation), family structure (young people from two- parent families are more likely to participate), and race/ethnicity (Latino youth are less likely to participate) (U.S. Department of Education, 1990; Raymore, Godbey and Crawford, 1994; Huebner and Mancini, 2003; cf. Holland and Andre, 1987; Lock and Costello, 2000 for reviews). However, little is known about the circumstances and processes through which these factors operate.

What barriers exist to program quality or content, and how do stakeholders work to overcome these barriers?

The problem of tying afterschools' success to test scores is seen as a barrier for many afterschool providers. Not equipped with the right resources or staff many are forced into tying program outcomes to academic achievement. Many afterschool program providers want to create a policy agenda that focuses on youth resiliency. Afterschool has been shown to impact children's resiliency, however, only when the programs are of the highest quality, include elements that are known to promote resiliency, and engage students for substantial periods of time.

The conversation about the effectiveness of afterschool will remain fixed on the failure to raise test scores until programs take it upon themselves to shift the debate. Shifting the discussion on the effectiveness of afterschool from one measure to multiple measures of whole child success requires that programs; ensure they are delivering the highest quality

service possible, become unified in describing and advocating their goal as the development of resiliency, and increase their level of collaboration with schools.

What gaps exist between youth afterschool interests and to program quality or content?

Understanding the trajectory of youth's interests and involvement in structured activities over time must be an important element in improving the system of afterschool services available. This may include, for example, incorporating youth's input into program provision to ensure programs are responsive as their interests change, and providing better links to other opportunities and resources outside of the initial activity that match the evolving interests of youth (Grossman et al., 2002). This may not be an easy task. In addition to differences in the number of afterschool organizations that exist in different communities their orientations, capacities, and resources also differ, as does the nature and quality of the activities they offer, the extent to which they are perceived as welcoming and accessible, the degree to which they are responsive to youth and community needs, and the extent to which they work with other organizations to deliver services (McLaughlin et al., 1994; Halpern, 1999; Quinn, 1999). In order to bridge the gap between youth afterschool services we need to learn more about effective outreach strategies and how to support the capacity of California afterschool organizations to connect with and best serve youth.

What do stakeholders expect to get out of creating an afterschool “quality” policy agenda, and how is this connected to current literature?

A review of afterschool and schoolday research and evaluation reveals several underlying similarities for programs that achieve results with youth. These elements are summarized below, and following that is a figure that indicates how successful programs have delivered these elements as well as how these high-quality programs have impacted resiliency.

A. Caring Relationships

The research review consistently indicates that caring relationships is the number one element needed in order to promote youth resiliency. An environment in which children feel emotionally supported and cared for is created through tending caring relationships throughout the whole program structure. It not only about the relationships between adults and children, it is also about the relationships between the adults in the program. Re-iterated over and over is that it not the activities alone that lead to an impact on resiliency, it is the quality of the interactions that does.

B. Array of Interesting Enrichment Activities

It is essential to offer students an array of activities and that these are of interest to them. This array includes many of the schoolday and extracurricular programs that schools are less able to provide themselves (due to budget cuts and the NCLB focus on testing), including the written arts, performing and visual arts, physical fitness and sports activities, the sciences and community service. Each of these types of activities has been shown to impact children’s resiliency and learning skills in

essential and complementary ways to schoolday instruction (see later section in this paper). In addition, the issue of children's motivation to attend afterschool programs, and continue participating for longer periods of time, is related to their sustained interest in the activity opportunities.

C. Flexible Opportunities for Skill Building

This element is closely connected to the one above. For all the types of enrichment activities, it is important that they include opportunities to build skills specific to that activity as well as academic skills and inquiry-based learning skills. For children who are not experiencing a sense of success during the schoolday, enrichment activities can help to build their sense of efficacy and engage them in learning styles that may be better suited to their own style than the more traditional schoolday textbook based instruction. Flexibility is critical as children come to the program with varying levels of skills in each of the enrichment areas. In addition, the types of opportunities and skills focus needs to be flexible depending upon the age of the children being served since afterschool serves children from kindergarten through high school.

D. Opportunities for Youth Contribution

Authentic involvement of children in decision-making is critical. This includes their involvement in making decisions about what they choose to do each day and their input into larger decision-making related to the program, on topics of importance to them such as rules and incentives. Similar to caring relationships, this is accomplished in part by modeling the behaviors. That is, to have a participatory style with children, the adults need to have a participatory style with each other.

Children's contribution also goes beyond decision-making to opportunities to contribute through ways such as community service. This element becomes increasingly critical during the middle and high school years.

E. Safe and Supportive Environment

Youth both feel and are physically safe when at the program and going to and from the program is the foundation of all efforts. Just as critical is that children feel emotionally safe within the program. This happens when there is structure to the program, clear expectations about behavior, ongoing supervision of children, sharing of high expectations by staff with children, and the caring relationships described above.

F. Parent Involvement

While there is less research on parent involvement in afterschool, research on the effects of parent involvement in children's education is plentiful and shows clear connections to children's success. Research has shown that when parents are more involved in their children's education, students have better academic performance and social competence. The role of afterschool is to promote additional ways in which parents can be involved in their children's education and learning.

Research and Evaluation Identification of Programming Elements that Have Impacted Children's Resiliency

High-Quality Elements

Caring Relationships

Positive emotional climate
Caring relationships between adults and children, between children, and between adults
Adults model empathy, are warm & supportive
Low child to staff ratios (~ 11:1)

Array of Interesting Enrichment Activities

Of interest to the children in the program
Variety to appeal to differing & changing interests
In areas of written arts, performing and visual arts, physical fitness and sports activities, the sciences and community service

Flexible Opportunities for Skill Building

Meaningful challenges and skills to children
Challenge beyond what think can do and structure so success can occur
Intentionally promote learning in specific area and build in learning of academic skills
Employ variety of learning styles
Build skills in areas of physical, emotional, cultural, intellectual and social

Safe and Supportive Environment

Includes physical and emotional safety
Program has clear structure
Clearly defined and consistently enforced standards, rules and responsibilities
Staff shares high expectations with students
Staff regularly monitor students' behavior

Opportunities for Youth Contribution

Students have a say about what they do
Students have a say in decision-making about activities, rules, incentives, etc.
Participative style with students & between staff
Community and service learning involvement

Select Examples of Evidence of Impact

Social Competence

- o Fewer behavior problems for students in programs (Vandell, 1999)
- o Avoid high-risk behaviors when have supportive adults (Eccles et al., 1993; Tierny & Grossman, 1995)
- o Better conduct grades, emotional adjustment and peer relationships for students who spent more time in enrichment activities than those who did not (Vandell, 1999)
- o More appropriately handle anger when attended afterschool (Grossman et al., 2002)
- o Lower levels of problems such as drug and alcohol abuse found in programs that have safe/supportive environment are (Weissman et al., 2003)
- o Significant gains in classroom behavior for program students compared to control (HASP evaluation, 1990)
- o More likely to avoid high-risk behaviors when teens have at least one strong adult relationship, family or not (JAMA, 1997)

Problem Solving

- o Standardized test scores are higher at afterschool sites that are high-quality and have these elements than other sites (TASC Evaluation, 2005)
- o Standardized test scores on applied problems test are higher for children who consistently participated in extracurricular activities (Child Development, 2004)
- o Better work habits found for students who spent more time in enrichment activities than those who did not (Vandell, 1999)
- o School effort was less likely to decrease from high to low among participants than other students (Beacon Initiative Evaluation, 2004)
- o Grade point average increased when children were engaged in productive activities in non-school hours, especially if include leadership (Eccles and Barber, 1999)
- o Grades improve for youth who receive mentoring (Tierny & Grossman, 1995)

Autonomy

- o Self-efficacy less likely to decrease over time for higher-attending participants than lower-attending or non-participants (Beacon Initiative Evaluation, 2004)
- o Sense of competence and pride in school more likely for children in afterschool (Grossman et al., 2002)
- o Effort in reading is higher according to teachers for children in afterschool than not (21st CCLC Evaluation, 2003 & 2004)
- o Greater gains in self-concept for participants than control (HASP Evaluation, 1990)

Sense of Purpose

- o More likely to pay attention in class if attend afterschool (Grossman et al., 2002)
- o Desire to continue school after high school significantly more likely for participants (CASP Evaluation, 2002)

Research Data Collection Methods

The analysis presented in this report is based on in-depth interviews conducted with ten key informant interviews: Members of the California Afterschool Network- (The California Afterschool Network serves a diverse group of constituents including afterschool program providers, educators and local, regional and state-level intermediaries, advocates, researchers, and policy makers who support high quality afterschool experiences for children and youth, as well as afterschool program participants and their caretakers.) Interviews followed administration of a large-scale on-line survey of the California Afterschool Network List Serve. The in-depth interviews were designed in part to “get behind” the numbers and help interpret survey findings, but especially to ask some different kinds of questions that could not be answered in a survey format. Interviews were guided by a one-page, semi-structured interview protocol that asked all respondents a predetermined set of open-ended questions. This ensured responses by all respondents to a core set of questions in order to facilitate cross-respondent comparison while allowing the opportunity for unforeseen issues and observations to be provided by each respondent during the course of the interview. Coding and analysis of interviews occurred at multiple points and degrees of conceptualization.

Following data collection, a codebook was generated deductively from the research questions and inductively from early analyses of interview responses, and codes were incorporated in the qualitative online analysis program called Zoomerange. The survey was called the “California Afterschool Network Policy Feedback Survey” The

interviewer wrote a cover sheet that summarized the top eight "Quality Policy Topics" interview themes, using a Likert Scale the relevance policy question relevance was gauged. Individual responses were also gathered using a ranking and reply system. Adopting a technique from content analysis, was looked at by numerical counts of core codes as one way of gauging the relative policy importance's. In addition, a vignette of each interview was written that detailed each stakeholders current involvement in afterschool programs and their opinions about strengthening afterschool quality policy. The vignettes provide a cross- check for themes and explanations that had been identified in the code-driven analysis and offer an integrated summary of individual stakeholders choices and experiences.

This report explores the perspectives of California afterschool stakeholders the influences, barriers, contexts, and processes that contribute to quality afterschool programs. Research questions that guide this investigation include:

Research Questions

What Makes High-Quality Afterschool Programs?

This following prompt was used to generate survey responses to the above question:

“The California Afterschool Network is trying to gain a sense from the afterschool field of its interest in key policy issues that might be taken up by legislative policy makers, state administrators, local policy makers, and other policy arena’s in the new session.

Please rank the following policies by level of relevance to afterschool field.”

The survey asked stakeholders to rank and identify the relevance of the following afterschool policies :

- Evaluation Policy
- The Coordination of Afterschool and Childcare Policy
- Afterschool Wellness Policy
- Afterschool Obesity/Nutrition Policy
- Afterschool Resources for Older Youth
- Rural Afterschool Policy
- Workforce Development Policy
- Under-Represented Youth and Parent Voice
- Other: _____

An example of the key informant protocol can be found in Appendix 1:

An example of the on-line survey can be found in Appendix 2:

Research Findings:

Case Studies- Vignettes

In their comments and preferences, afterschool stakeholders reflect on the prospect of developing afterschool policies that support quality interests. This takes us back to stakeholders expressed interest in creating afterschool policies that focus on creating a quality afterschool agenda that is in some tangible sense theirs; where, in the words of Robert Halpern (2000, p. 186), "the adult agenda is modest, if not held at bay." Although most stakeholders accept the importance of students succeeding academically, they do not want to re- create elsewhere the pedagogy and culture of their schools. Receiving training and instruction is much less important to these afterschool providers. Through the key informant interviews it is found that learning things that are new and challenging, and providing supports and opportunities for the whole child "well-being" relates to the research found in the literature review. This issues is explored in more depth in the following section.

There is little agreement among policymakers and afterschool stakeholders about the primary purposes of afterschool programs for youth, with varying emphases placed on supplementing educational outcomes or on more broadly positive developmental goals (Halpern, 2000). In the United States, expectations tend to be guided by a fairly instrumental view of programs' utility, focused on their contribution to child well-being because of their promise to prevent problem behaviors (e.g., Kirby and Coyle, 1997; Catalano et al., 1998) or to promote positive youth development (e.g., McLaughlin et al., 2000; Larson, 2000).

The focus has been on quality afterschool policy as a group of issue concerns, with the intent to draw general conclusions by synthesizing across individual narratives and interview responses to uncover patterns of shared and divergent meanings, values, and experience. Before distilling these conclusions further and providing some of the concrete recommendations for practice and policy they might imply (to which we turn in the final section of this report), the focus is briefly on presenting a small set of illustrative vignettes—brief case studies of the circumstances and pathways chosen by a few individual students—in order to ground the general patterns and conclusions reached thus far in the concrete experience of some of the stakeholders with whom interviews were conducted. In doing so, this report seeks both to make more immediate the processes through which stakeholders move in responding to quality afterschool policies and to sharpen some possible responses to the barriers and complexities these issue face.

These vignettes present stakeholders who vary with regard to the issue of afterschool quality policy. Examining this variation allows the exploration of specific negotiations and policy choices that stakeholders make in contexts that are both similar and different.

Case Study: #1

- Please note names have been changed as to not attribute comments*

Michelle -Afterschool Teacher: Michelle a second grade afterschool teacher. Michelle is accustomed to thinking a lot about all the needs of her students. She worked at Willow School, a small K–6 school offering a safe, caring, and nurturing environment for students and families. The school looked holistically at the needs of its students and helped them with a range of needs, sometimes even with clothing or food. She believes

that the current afterschool program is an extension of these services.

Michelle has been working hard with students over the course of the school year to improve social skills and help to be more compliant in the school setting. She feels if students could learn to be less impulsive, they could focus better on academics; if they could learn to make appropriate social overtures to their peers, students would feel better about themselves, and even feel more confident in learning. In Michelle's way of thinking, the afterschool program is helping students develop socially was a critical key to unlocking improved reading and math performance.

Enriching afterschool experiences are a fundamental ingredient in this formula. If student's afterschool time could reinforce social skills it could in turn improve the academic performance of students. Michelle is convinced that afterschool programs should have time to focus on student social skills. She believes that creating a quality afterschool policies that focus student social well-being would increase overall academic gains at school.

Case Study: # 2

Mary-Parent of an Afterschool Elementary Students: An afterschool family day care arrangement had collapsed, and Mary had had no choice but to send her child to the school-ran afterschool program. A hardworking single mother of three Mary works hard to make ends meet. Marla valued working and harbored some small pride at her ability to stay off welfare, but it was a round-the-clock challenge to raise a child and hold down a job. She worries constantly about how to arrange afterschool care for her daughter and all the associated logistics. Right now, Mary sees the community as unsafe and lurking with dangers for her child—dangerous traffic patterns not far from school, crazy people

hanging out on the streets.

Mary views afterschool as key resource for family. Afterschool programs to her create a sense of economic security for her and her family. The programs probably cost much more than family day care. She is content to allow the school responsibility for many areas of her child's life. For example, the school had arranged for her child to attend afterschool well-being initiative – at the Student Well-Being Center it was discovered that her daughter had a learning disability that had not been diagnosed before. Mary values the ability of the Well-Being Center to connect with the afterschool program and the extra Well-Being check-ins that the afterschool program has offered her child in addition to academic support.

Case Study: # 3

Dick-Afterschool Program Administrator: Dick is the kind of administrator that believes if a student has a problem, you deal with it. He gives the example, that one day he had to cut short a fairly important telephone call to address an immediate concern in the building. A student had wandered off site again, and staff couldn't locate her. Dick had found her outside on the swings and spent time with her going over some of the school Social Curriculum rules for appropriate behavior.

Sometimes, too, dealing with a student's problem meant working on the community level. Then the school reached out into the community to find the right kind of help for the child. Dick served on the Board of a local youth organization and enjoyed the connection this provided to the larger community. However, he was concerned about the lack of collaboration across the many community social service agencies, the fighting

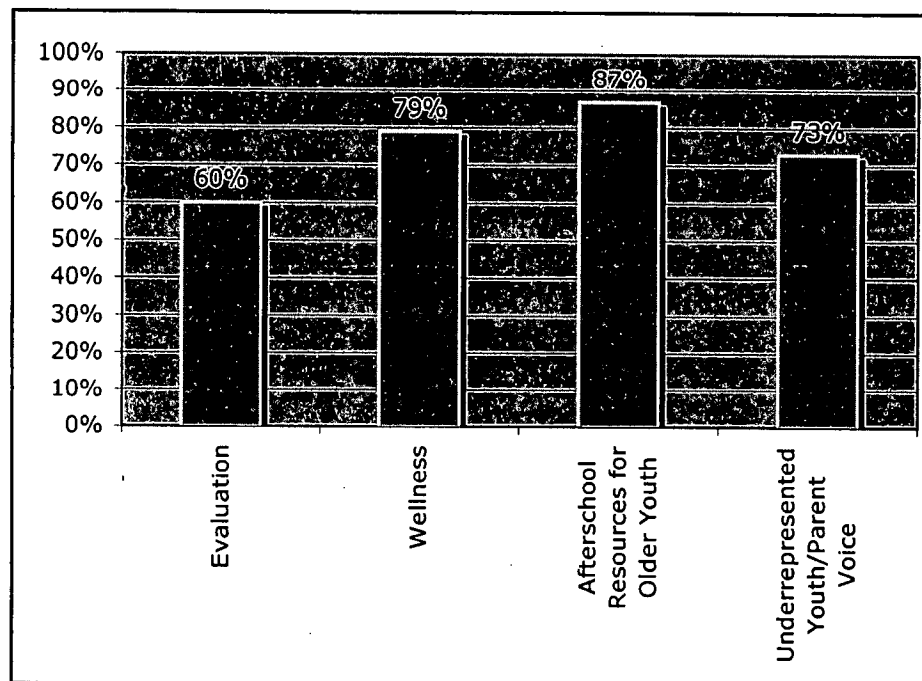
over turf, and the way the school had to pick up the pieces and coordinate services for a student or their family. Willow School's biggest challenge now was being expected to do more and more with less and less. Not just academics—but support to children and families. Although some families would take trips or do educational things with their kids, others simply didn't have a clue as to what enrichment activities would help their kids excel academically. The school tried to help by providing information about community enrichment activities in its newsletter, but he was sure that a fair number of these backpack-carried newsletters never made it home.

Dick also believes that afterschool activities don't necessarily have to be trips to museums or things like that. He recognized that not all families have access to such resources, and that there were many things to do in town that do not cost anything. He believes that a walk in the woods bordering town, looking at the vegetation, or time just spent by parents talking with the child about life experiences, were valuable and necessary lessons. Parents need to provide the opportunities for children to learn, whether in formal programs or informal family time together. In fact, Dick actually worried that some of the kids were over-scheduled in after school activities—in effect, neglected by their parents. To him, nothing in afterschool was as important as the time parents spent engaged with their children—especially underrepresented parents and youth.

On-line Survey Findings:

Most Important Issues In Quality Afterschool Programs (N=50)

Table 1: *Findings are based on top ranked interview and online survey policy responses in the high/medium-high categories.



Many stakeholders describe a connection between afterschool programs and the present and future policy advocacy objectives. The most common category that stakeholders (87%) agreed should shape the quality discussion in afterschool policy was afterschool resources for older youth. This discussion mainly focused on having Federal 21st Century dollars shift to primarily becoming afterschool resources for older youth –because on the enormous allocation of funds now being distributed to only K-9th grades. Shifting Federal 21 Century Afterschool funds would create a more even distribution of afterschool resources to high-school ages youth. The second category that stakeholders would like to

afterschool quality to focus on is wellness (79%). A focus in this category would allow afterschool programs to enrich activities that focus on the social, emotional, and physical well-being of students. The third category that afterschool stakeholders wanted to develop quality policy around is afterschool resources for underrepresented youth and parents. A focus on this issue would allow for under-represented youth and parents the opportunity to voice input on needs and concerns of families with low social economic standing (73%). The last focus that afterschool quality policy should focus on is evaluation (60%). A focus in this area would allow stakeholders to develop a statewide system of afterschool program evaluation outcomes.

While afterschool providers are appropriately varied in their goals and services depending on their mission and community, it is important to become unified in the general conversation about the role afterschool plays in children's success. This discussion is not separate from academic success, but rather inclusive of **positive social, emotional and academic development**. An increasing body of research shows that afterschool programs can contribute to youth resiliency, and a long history of research on resiliency shows that it contributes to children's academic success as well as their lifelong success,

Afterschool has been shown to impact children's resiliency, however, only when the programs are of the highest quality, include elements that are known to promote resiliency, and engage students for substantial periods of time. The conversation about the effectiveness of afterschool will remain fixed on the failure to raise test scores until programs take it upon themselves to shift the debate. Shifting the discussion on the effectiveness of afterschool from one measure to multiple measures of whole child

success requires that programs achieve three objectives: ensure they are delivering the highest quality service possible, become unified in describing and advocating their goal as the development of resiliency, and increase their level of collaboration with schools.

Conclusions and Areas for Further Research

It is important to take into account the perspectives of stakeholders when shaping policy and practice to promote quality afterschool programs school. Proposition 49 was largely spearheaded by politicians that had little or no knowledge of stakeholders perspectives.

While legislation like SB 638 has tried to quickly add and shape proposition 49 legislation to represent stakeholder's opinions and needs of the afterschool field.

Proposition 49 legislation and amendments lack stakeholder afterschool quality programming interests. Moreover, current legislation lacks the input of stakeholder needs and investments--- such as, how they respond to the opportunities, commitments, uncertainties, barriers they face in their day-to-day afterschool programs, and their insights into how to respond to these circumstances. Through this research I have found that many afterschool stakeholder are the premier experts and are instructive in considering how to improve and expand the opportunities available and address the circumstances that promote quality afterschool policy.

This paper provides a better understanding of how stakeholders feel about the strengths and challenges regarding current Proposition 49 afterschool policy. It also supplies a strong view on the relative advantages and barriers presented by afterschool policy and the gaps that exist in current legislation. It begins to develops concrete ways to align an afterschool quality policy agenda that speaks to and gains buy-in form California

afterschool stakeholders. This report offers different contexts of stakeholder programs, their assessments of current opportunity, and their judgments regarding the nature of quality programs and policies that are likely to foster their involvement. It provides "next-steps for afterschool policy mobilization efforts. In each of the four top ranked quality categories work still remains on how to incorporate inclusive stakeholder support, voice and policy details around these issues. –This report is a starting point to begin to have those discussion with stakeholders in the California afterschool community. Finally, this report provides a window into how afterschool stakeholders connect (or fail to connect) their policy interests to their current program goals and future aspirations. Understanding these issues, in turn, provides some insight into how to improve strategies for a California afterschool quality policy agenda.

In consideration of the strategies used to collect information in this report, it is important to take a systemic view, focusing not only on numbers of stakeholder opinions collected in this research and the details (though these are clearly important), but also on the individual, familial, organizational, and neighborhood-level factors and dynamics that may have an impact on program attributes (e.g., availability, access, quality) as well as on participation and, ultimately outcomes. Through this research it is discovered that afterschool policy and practice needs to develop and contribute to further fund afterschool resources for older youth, promote underrepresented youth and parent voice, student well-being, and develop a statewide program evaluation on outcomes.

Within this framework, the perspectives of stakeholders that have been explored suggest some practical implications for improving quality in afterschool programs. The

combination of an interest in multiple and flexible offerings and the qualitative aspects of environment and programs contribute to a broad interest on the part of afterschool stakeholders shaped around youth-focused needs rather than driven by program models or objectives. Thus, beyond (and shaping the provision of) particular programs and activities, stakeholders are interested in more flexible, quality policy that focuses enriching quality activities that are grounded in the “whole child well-being approach—largely aligned with resiliency research”.

One overarching theme suggested by many stakeholders is provision and connection between school and neighborhood, across programs, across organizations, and across age groups. It also points to broader issues, such as addressing neighborhood factors (safety, stability, access) rather than just adjusting to the barriers they present, and promoting organizational capacity (staff, facilities, relationships) rather than focusing only on programmatic investments. To better understand what is likely to be effective on these fronts, we also need to develop a more refined understanding of the “supply side” of the afterschool funding opportunity equation. This includes investigating the existence and functioning of local “systems” of opportunities for youth, the dynamics of organizational provision and interorganizational relationships that sustain them, and the ways in which such relationships within local networks may affect availability of, access to, and participation in afterschool opportunities and that may, over time, contribute to developing quality in afterschool policy.

Final Notes

In thinking about afterschool policy that is linked to topics of quality one also has address the issue of test scores. Today's education system is weighted heavily on student test scores many afterschool programs have been built as extensions of schoolday learning with program outcomes that mirror No Child Left Behind legislation. Research shows that children who are resilient are successful, productive and healthy adults. Their success academically is only one component of that resiliency, albeit a critical one. While the current accepted measure of this success is standardized test scores, there is not consistent evidence from current evaluations linking afterschool to impacts on test scores.

Some of this inability to link afterschool to test scores is a measurement issue, a topic for another paper. However, evaluations of programs that have shown impacts on children's resiliency (including other measures of academic success such as schoolday attendance, future school aspirations, report card grades and drop-out rates) do consistently reveal two critical issues that afterschool providers can begin addressing right now. First, the majority of children are not being engaged in programs for as long or as often as needed for impacts to be evident. Second, afterschool programs must be high-quality and contain the elements described here: caring relationships, array of interesting enrichment activities, flexible opportunities for skill building, safe and supportive environment, opportunities for youth contribution, and parent involvement. --- Resiliency research is closely aligned with the top ranked and surveyed afterschool quality policies identified in this research report.

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Sample- Key Informant Protocol: Appendix 1

Protocol Afterschool Policy Quality:

Project overview

1. A. (if overseeing afterschool program(s)) Please tell me about the program(s) that you coordinate, including the target youth populations, the types of services they provide, and where they are located.

Probe: youth populations served

geographic area(s) served (and local capacity to reach more remote areas)

sources of funding

budget

capacity to serve English learners

- B. (if coordinating a network of afterschool programs) Please tell me about the purpose of your network and the participating programs.

Probe: youth populations served by programs/network

Types of providers (government, CBOs, faith-based)

Geographic areas served (and local capacity to reach more remote areas)

Sources of funding

Capacity to serve English learners

- C. (if providing an overview of community afterschool programs) Please tell me about the programs in the area served by X school district.

Probe: youth populations served

Geographic areas served (and local capacity to reach more remote areas)

Types of providers (government, CBOs, faith-based, other) and their relative importance

Capacity to serve English learners

Please rank the top three policy interests of your choice:

☐

Evaluation Policy

☐

The coordination of Afterschool and Childcare Policy

☐

Afterschool Wellness Policy

☐

Afterschool Obesity/Nutrition Policy

☐

Afterschool Resources for Older Youth

☐

Rural Afterschool Policy

☐

Workforce Development

☐

Under-Represented youth and Parent Voice

☐

Other: _____ (This would include an afterschool policy interest of your choice)

- 1.** What specifically do you think are the most important factors related to afterschool evaluation policy?

- 2.** What specifically do you think are the most important factors related to the coordination of afterschool and childcare policy?
- 3.** What specifically do you think are the most important factors related to afterschool wellness policy?
- 4.** What specifically do you think are the most important factors related to afterschool obesity/nutrition policy?
- 5.** What specifically do you think are the most important factors related to afterschool resources for older youth policy?
- 6.** What specifically do you think are the most important factors related to afterschool workforce development policy?
- 7.** What specifically do you think are the most important factors related to afterschool under-represented youth and parent voice policy?

Sample- Online Zoomerange Survey: Appendix 2

California Afterschool Network: Afterschool Policy Feedback Form

The California Afterschool Network's Policy Committee is trying to gain a sense from the afterschool field of its interest in key policy issues that might be taken up by legislative policy makers, state administrators, local policy makers, or in other policy arena's in the new session. This information will be used to prioritize the Network's policy agenda.

Please take a few minutes to complete this survey. The survey is confidential. However, you will have the option of providing your contact name at the end of the survey. This information will be used to identify people who might be interested in participating in other discussions around afterschool policy.

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California Afterschool Network: Afterschool Policy Feedback Form

1

Please click on the button indicating the primary afterschool network(s) with which you are affiliated.

California Afterschool Network

Afterschool Policy Forum Member

Other, please specify

2

Indicate how relevant you believe Evaluation Policy is to the afterschool field. A focus in this area would address outcomes, issues of quality, etc.

Low Med-Low Medium Med-High High

3

In your opinion, what are the most important factors related to afterschool evaluation policy?

4

Indicate how relevant you believe Coordination of Afterschool and Childcare Policy is to the afterschool field. A focus in this area would include strengthening the coordination of afterschool and childcare public funding.

Low Med-Low Medium Med-High High

5

In your opinion, what are the most important factors related to the coordination of afterschool and childcare policy?

6

Indicate how relevant you believe Afterschool Wellness Policy is to the afterschool field. This focus includes strengthening afterschool sites to include student wellness (physical and emotional) supports and opportunities.

Low Med-Low Medium Med-High High

7

In your opinion, what are the most important factors related to afterschool wellness policy?

8

Indicate how relevant you believe Afterschool Obesity/Nutrition Policy is to the afterschool field. A focus in this area would include strengthening the coordination of afterschool and obesity/nutrition public funding.

Low Med-Low Medium Med-High High

9

In your opinion, what are the most important factors related to afterschool obesity/nutrition policy?

10

Indicate how relevant you believe Afterschool Resources for Older Youth is to the afterschool field. A focus in this area would include strengthening older youth afterschool resources.

Low Med-Low Medium Med-High High

11

In your opinion, what are the most important policy factors related to afterschool resources for older youth?

12

Indicate how relevant you believe Rural Afterschool Policy is to the afterschool field. A focus in this area would include strengthening rural afterschool resources.

Low Med-Low Medium Med-High High

13

In your opinion, what are the most important factors related to rural afterschool policy?

14

Indicate how relevant you believe Workforce Development Policy is to the afterschool field. A focus in this area would include strengthening afterschool workforce development resources.

Low Med-Low Medium Med-High High

15

In your opinion, what are the most important factors related to afterschool workforce development policy?

16

Indicate how relevant you believe Under-Represented Youth and Parent Voice is to the afterschool field. A focus in this area would include strengthening afterschool policies to reflect the needs of under-represented youth and parent voice.

Low Med-Low Medium Med-High High

17

In your opinion, what are the most important factors related to policies around afterschool under-represented youth and parent voice?

18

Other: (This would include an afterschool policy interest of your choice.)

19

Please rank your top three personal policy interests. Enter a "1" for your first choice, a "2" for your second choice, and a "3" for your third choice. If you select "other" please indicate the policy area.

Evaluation

Coordination AS/Childcare Policy

Wellness

Obesity/ Nutrition

Resources for Older Youth

Rural Afterschool

Workforce Development

Under-Rep Youth/Parent Voice

Other

20

Please indicate any policy areas you personally would be willing to participate in discussions about with other people? (Optional)

21

If you are interested in participating in policy discussions please provide your contact information: (Optional)

Name:

Job Title:

Address 1:

Address 2:

City/Town:

State/Province:

Zip/Postal Code:

Daytime Phone:

Email Address:

Additional Survey and Interview Comments/Responses:

17. In your opinion, what are the most important factors related to policies around afterschool under-represented youth and parent voice?

#

Response

1

Include the art of conversation in training modules; staff with limited lived experience are often unsure of how to engage authentic responses with true thoughts and feelings of others

2

a) inclusion of these voices in policy discussions and decisions (e.g. of the Statewide Advisory Committee, the Network)

b) incorporation of the needs of under-represented youth in outcomes/evaluation standards and processes

c) incorporate use of disaggregated data in evaluations to assess differential impact of afterschool programming on different groups

3

lack of consistent and genuine support for effective engagement strategies.

4

making it mandatory for efforts to include and attract parent/youth input in policy centered around after-school care

5

not sure

6

In order for a program to work you have to have buy-in from both parents and students. If they are part of the policy makers the buy-in is made simpler. Experience in the this field tell me that it is not just the well-to-do that want to be involved in their childrens education. But, given the opprotunity parents from lower social-economic strat of or society will participate.

7

Service Learning as a statewide model on how to develop youth voice. TA training for adults on how to develop youth voice.

8

accessing the youth and parents and listening to their concerns

18. Other: (This would include an afterschool policy interest of your choice)

#

Response

1

Preserving and protecting local community responsibility and authority for well developed work force in after school

2

Getting COLA for ASES program

Supporting Congressional increases in 21st Century program

Ensuring that TA funding is utilized promptly and effectively

3

we would like to see -- and are working to help the field develop -- a set of "equity principles" to guide Prop 49/ASES

4

Community-based organizational course studies available at the college level to better prepare prospective after-school educators

5

expand providers to include park and recreation agencies as direct applicants for state and federal funds