

Journeys into Community

TRANSFORMING YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES
FOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

family



school

COMMUNITY

Dear Fellow Minnesotans,

We are excited to present, on behalf of the University of Minnesota, this final report from the Minnesota Commission on Out-of-School Time. It offers a blueprint for ensuring Minnesota's young people have engaging opportunities to learn and develop during the non-school hours. It summarizes the year-long work of the Commission and includes specific recommendations and actions for revitalizing Minnesota's communities as great places to raise families.

We are grateful to our fellow commissioners, to the young people who participated in the Youth Caucus as well as through focus groups and surveys, and to the professionals, parents, and other adults who shared with the Commission their experiences, ideas, concerns, and suggestions. Only by pulling together can Minnesota become a state where all children and youth have access to high-quality out-of-school time opportunities – opportunities that engage them, help them contribute, and help them become productive, responsible, invested community members.

Uniting together we can ensure that:

- ✦ Out-of-school time opportunities across the state are known and accessible as young people and their families make choices.
- ✦ Communities have the information and resources to address “opportunity gaps” and sustain out-of-school time opportunities.
- ✦ Youth workers, educators, parents, peers, and others find ways to engage all young people – particularly those who are not already participating – in high-quality, developmentally appropriate out-of-school time programs and activities.

Increasingly, Minnesotans are recognizing the stake we have in ensuring that our children and youth journey into our communities in ways that are appealing, engaging, and affordable, and that enhance their learning and development. When we invest in and support their journeys, we invest in and support the future of our communities and our state. We hope this report and the dialogue it stimulates will help us make those investments more wisely and soon.

ROBERT BRUININKS
PRESIDENT, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

CAROL TRUESDELL AND DON SHELBY
CO-CHAIRS, MINNESOTA COMMISSION ON OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME

MINNESOTA COMMISSION ON OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME

FINAL REPORT, JUNE 2005

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✦ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Journeys into Community

TRANSFORMING YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES
FOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Minnesota has a long tradition as a great place to raise a family.

In addition to supporting academic achievement through strong schools, many communities also provide developmental opportunities for children and youth during the hours when they would otherwise be without structure or supervision. During this out-of-school time, as it is often called, programs and activities are available to young people in family homes, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA/YWCAs, sports clubs, schools, and other community settings.

While the specific activities and physical environments vary, developmentally focused experiences share a common goal. They create a variety of enriching experiences through which emerging interests and relationships can be nurtured, skills tested and perfected, teamwork and leadership learned, and decision making experienced. These competencies are critical investments for young people and their communities.

Recently, new research findings about how human minds develop have made it clear that these types of activities are even more important than originally thought. What has become clear is that at the same time young people are engaged in activities and programs outside of school or home, important, life-long changes are also taking place in the brain.

Creating a Vision

Through the establishment of the President's Initiative on Children, Youth, and Families, President Robert Bruininks committed the University of Minnesota to convening experts across disciplines for the purpose of identifying how Minnesota could best support the healthy growth and development of its young people in their journey from early childhood through middle childhood and adolescence.

As an action step in this initiative, President Bruininks appointed the Minnesota Commission on Out-of-School Time, inviting the participation of experts in the fields of child and adolescent development, as well as representatives of business, philanthropy, youth development programs, and county, state, and tribal government. Led by recognized Minnesota leaders in communications and philanthropy, the Commission's charge was to create a vision and strategies to ensure every Minnesota youth access during non-school hours to opportunities supportive of their optimal development. The Commission's charge was reinforced by research findings confirming the critical role of high-quality out-of-school time opportunities in assuring that children and youth reach adulthood ready to assume their roles as responsible community members and leaders.¹

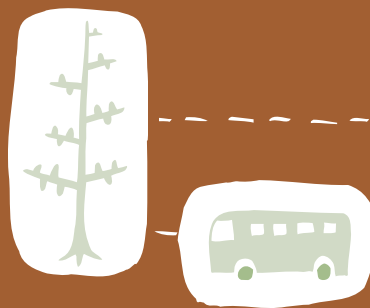
Through a series of work groups, meetings, and dialogues, this intergenerational group identified a *vision* for out-of-school time in Minnesota; *key issues* facing families, young people, program providers, and policy makers; and a series of *recommendations* – all of which are described in the full report. This Executive Summary provides an overview of the findings.

¹ For more information on Commission proceedings, see <http://www.mncost.org>.

WHAT IS AN OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME OPPORTUNITY?

It is helpful to think of development as two intertwined processes. One process is internal: the continuing development of the brain architecture. The other is external, as connections to others are evolving and expanding. Challenging, high-quality opportunities, both formal and informal, that happen outside of school and home help merge the two tracts, and young people discover, explore, learn, practice, and make choices about what it means to be productive, contributing members of the community.

Such opportunities occur after school, on weekends, and during the summer. Examples range from music lessons to youth theater; from visits with grandparents or other elders to a part-time job; from fun at a skate park to participation in summer camp; from Youth-in-Government activities to reading at a library; from hanging out with a friend and her mom to participating in sports.



The Vision

Commissioners began their work by creating a Minnesota vision for out-of-school time. By 2020, Minnesota will be recognized as a state where:

Every young person chooses to become engaged.

Every family has access to quality opportunities.

Every community has a clear plan and adequate support.

Every program has supports to ensure quality.

An effective and efficient public/private partnership stimulates, supports, and sustains opportunities in all communities.

Our citizens understand and support the value of these opportunities for learning and development.

Across Minnesota, there are examples of excellent community-based youth programs staffed by skilled, highly qualified, adult leaders. At the same time, it's far too common to find opportunity gaps, uneven quality, and struggles for sustainability. If Minnesota is to make the most of these valuable hours when young people are active, we must become systematic and deliberate in working toward this vision.

Core Commitments

To transform this vision into reality, Minnesota must value and commit to:

Meet the developmental needs of children and youth for the first two decades of their lives.

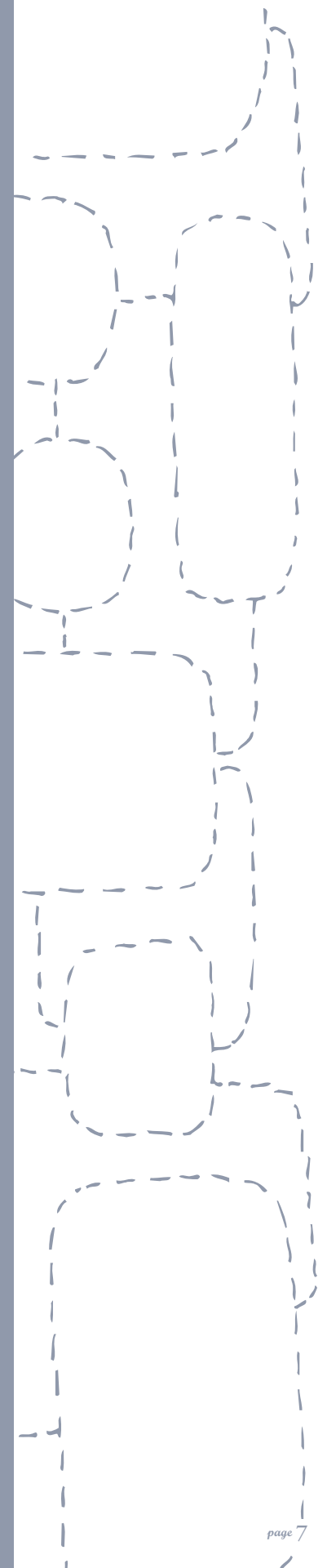
Take a positive, asset-based approach to child and youth development.

Ensure access for all to high-quality, developmental opportunities.

Create and support youth/adult partnerships in non-school opportunities.

Require accountability at program, community, and state levels.

Support out-of-school time opportunities through a combination of family, provider, and public contributions.



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Recommendations and Action Strategies

The Commission's recommendations seek to help Minnesota build a more intentional approach to engaging young people from ages 5 to 18 in developmental opportunities today so that they can become reliable, responsible, and productive community members of tomorrow. Taken together, these recommendations and action strategies provide a road map for ensuring that all young persons who live in Minnesota have access to high-quality opportunities for learning and development as they become increasingly active in their communities.

family



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1

RECOMMENDATION I ENCOURAGE POSITIVE CHOICES

CREATE STRONG INCENTIVES AND SUPPORTS TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES CHOOSE APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES.

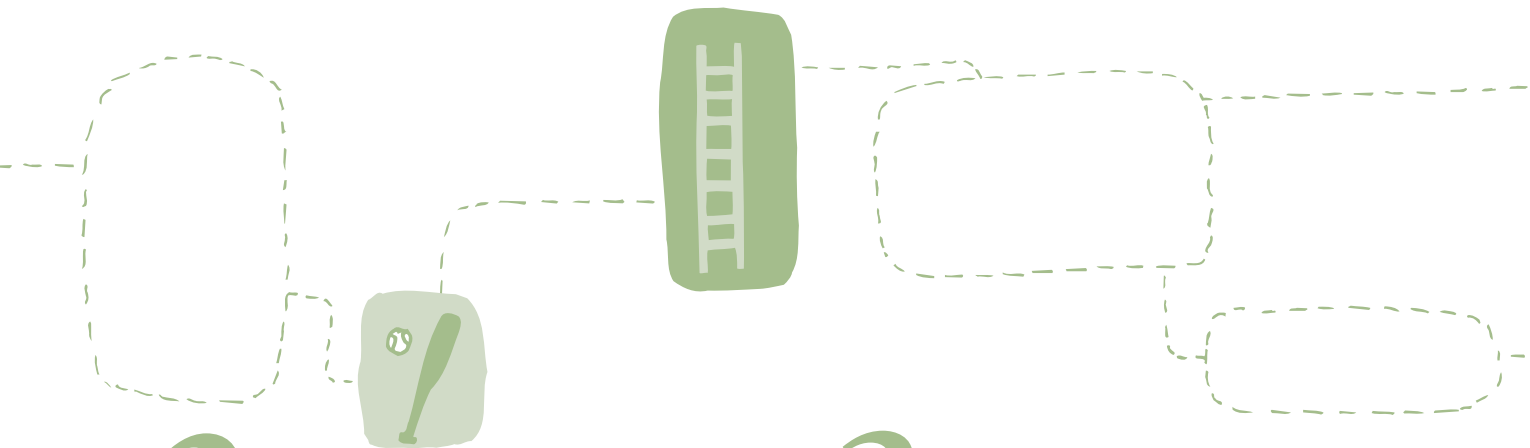
INVEST Create and support a comprehensive, technology-enhanced system to help young people and families know what opportunities are available.

STUDY Study the choices young people and families make in relation to the types and levels of opportunities available in different communities.

EMPOWER Establish a periodic statewide community survey process to systematically canvas youth and families about their interests in different types of opportunities.

UNITE Unite around and invest in family-friendly, technology-enhanced, incentive-driven, and policy-supported mechanisms that help young people and families make, record, and benefit from their positive choices.

MOBILIZE Encourage teachers and other adults who work with young people and families to ask about, suggest, and support positive out-of-school time choices.



2

RECOMMENDATION II INCREASE THE PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH TO 100 PERCENT

ENSURE HIGH-QUALITY COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES AND PROGRAMS ARE AVAILABLE TO ALL YOUNG PEOPLE.

UNITE Unite and mobilize Minnesota communities around clear and common goals of increasing the number of engaged youth to 80 percent by 2010 and 100 percent by 2020.

MOBILIZE Mobilize parents, youth workers, family members, community organizations, and volunteers to come together and create informal activities and connections in communities.

INVEST Invest in scholarships and systems to ensure that youth with limited financial resources have access to the full range of community-based opportunities.

POLICY Establish new state policies that support the creation of “youth opportunity zones” where organizations and families can receive special grants or fee waivers for creating sustainable, positive, learning opportunities.

INVEST Invest in growing the number and variety of youth workers who can work effectively with diverse, isolated, and hard-to-reach communities and with disengaged young people.

STUDY Explore options and provide incentives for enhancing youth participation using technology to connect isolated or homebound young people.

3

RECOMMENDATION III ASSURE QUALITY, ENHANCE IMPACT

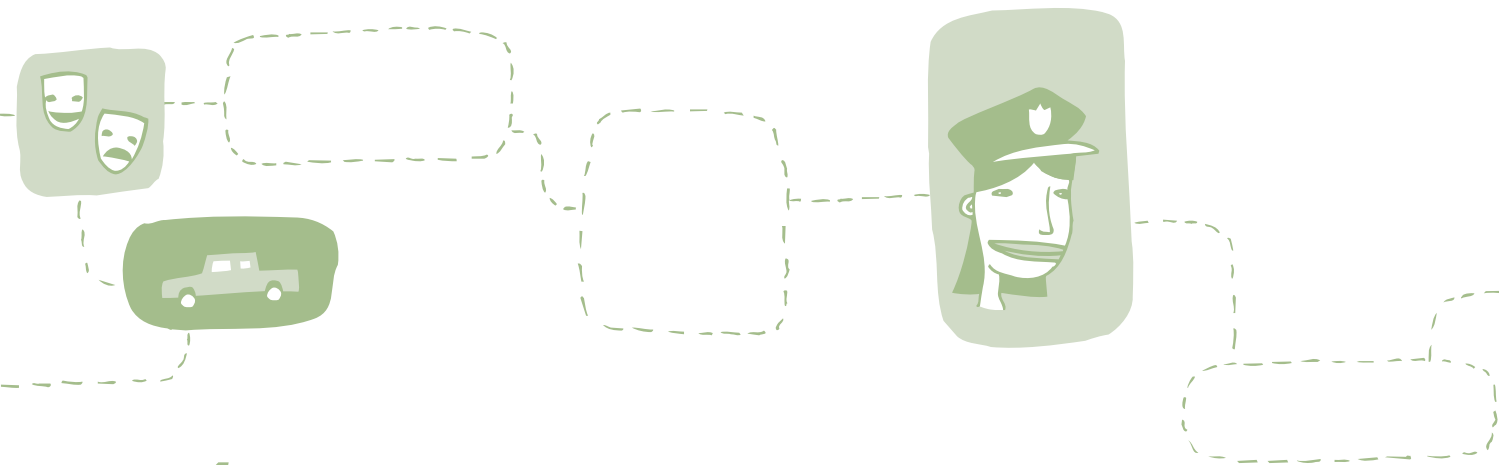
ASSURE THAT ALL COMMUNITIES HAVE WAYS TO UNDERSTAND, ASSESS, AND INCREASE THE QUALITY OF AGE-APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

MOBILIZE Mobilize communication efforts to help the public understand and value quality in youth development programs, organizations, and practitioners.

EMPOWER Create, resource, empower, and connect “Quality Improvement Teams” of young people and adults designed to assess the quality of community programs and to encourage use of best practices, technical assistance, and other continuous improvement strategies.

UNITE Unite behind a comprehensive “Education and Training Alliance” designed to strengthen quality by assuring the coordination and availability of education, training, technical assistance, and professional development for adult volunteers and the professional staff who work with young people.

STUDY Establish a new University – community initiative dedicated to generating useful research to understand and assess programs, practices, and professionals providing opportunities in the community during non-school time.



4

RECOMMENDATION IV INCREASE COMMUNITY CAPACITY

BUILD MECHANISMS TO STIMULATE LOCAL PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION, SUSTAINABILITY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

STUDY Invest in incentives for community collaborations to assess, map, plan, and support sustainable opportunities for their young people.

POLICY Develop out-of-school time policies and funding streams that provide communities and programs with a predictable and sustainable level of public funding that is designed to stimulate access for all as well as effectively target families and communities most in need.

EMPOWER Design and implement a youth engagement process that will bring youth, citizens, and program providers together to help individual communities assess the degree to which communities are youth-development and family friendly.

5

RECOMMENDATION V WEAVE A STATEWIDE FABRIC OF SUPPORT

ESTABLISH A STATEWIDE NETWORK AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL OPERATING SYSTEM OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT THAT INCLUDES PEOPLE, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, PHILANTHROPIC FOUNDATIONS, AND OTHERS COMMITTED TO ADVANCING MINNESOTA'S OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME CAPACITY.

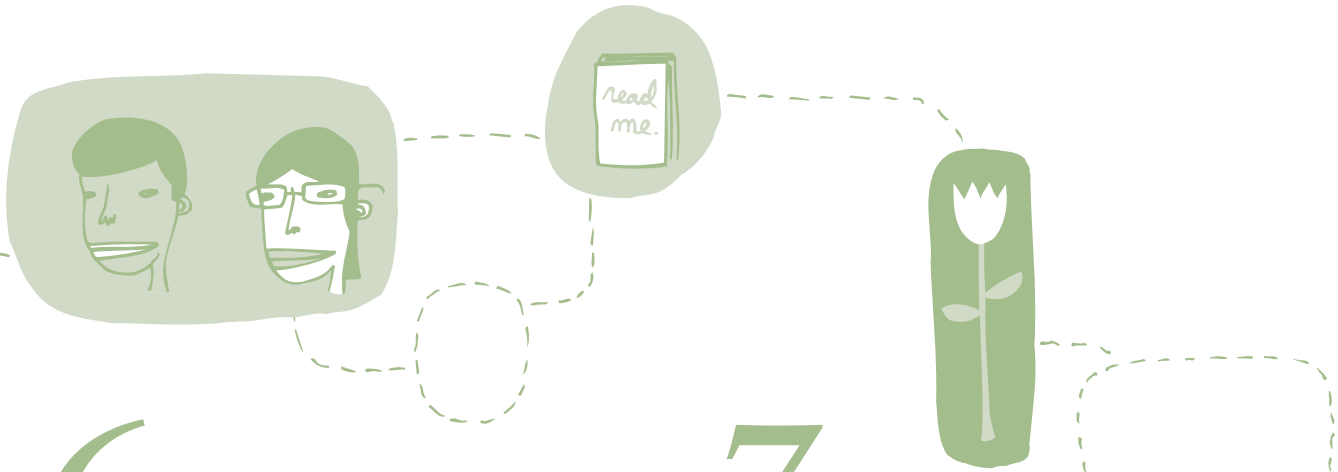
POLICY Create a unified legislative strategy designed to stimulate, support, and help fund both public and private efforts that ensure high-quality community opportunities are available to all youth during non-school hours.

UNITE Unite behind the efforts of the Minnesota Out-of-School Time Partnership to establish a funded, staffed, and focused hub to support and stimulate a statewide, independent operating system for out-of-school time in Minnesota.

EMPOWER Establish a biennial Youth Caucus on Out-of-School Time to advise the Minnesota Out-of-School Time Partnership.

INVEST Invest in the development of a system of accountability and continuous improvement that supports the growth and effectiveness of community youth development experiences, strengthens professionals and volunteers, and measures program impact.

MOBILIZE Develop linkages and expand connections among existing organizations, community collaborations, statewide groups, and formal associations.



6

RECOMMENDATION VI BUILD PUBLIC WILL

STRENGTHEN PUBLIC AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING, AND DEMAND FOR HIGH-QUALITY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN COMMUNITIES.

UNITE Conduct a four-year social marketing campaign to increase public understanding and enhance effective advocacy for high-quality, accessible, and powerful community opportunities.

EMPOWER Involve young people in a marketing campaign to promote youth development programs and experiences, and to engage young people’s energy and contributions in communities.

MOBILIZE Create ways to sustain and expand efforts that enhance awareness, increase action, and strengthen advocacy efforts on behalf of nonformal learning opportunities for children and youth.

7

RECOMMENDATION VII ESTABLISH INVESTMENT FUND AND FINANCIAL PLAN

ESTABLISH A BALANCED PERSONAL – PRIVATE – PUBLIC INVESTMENT FUND AND OVERALL FINANCIAL PLAN TO IMPLEMENT THE VISION FOR ENGAGING MINNESOTA’S YOUNG PEOPLE.

INVEST Design and establish a \$12-million annual investment fund and the mechanisms needed to secure, allocate, and account for use of these funds.

UNITE Until a better sense of the overall need and cost is determined, unite to maintain current levels of public funding.

STUDY Design and execute a study of the supply and demand of out-of-school opportunities and the factors that affect their costs as well as benefits.

FUND Support the bundling and focusing of existing state and federal funding for youth development, child care, school-age care, prevention programs, and extended-day/21st Century Learning Centers to ensure its effective and efficient use.

FUND Encourage the emergence of a Youth Development Funders Group to help bring focus and consistency to private foundation support.

THE FINAL REPORT:

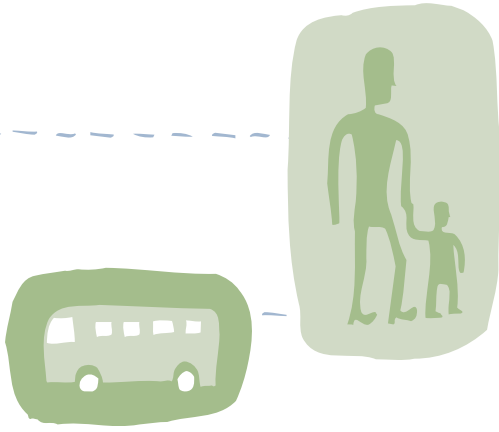
Journeys into Community

TRANSFORMING YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

WHAT IS AN OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME OPPORTUNITY?

From a young person's perspective, it is helpful to think of development as two intertwined processes. On the inside, there is the continuing development of the brain architecture. Externally, connections to others are evolving and expanding. Challenging, high-quality opportunities, both formal and informal, that happen outside of school and home help merge the two tracts because children and youth discover, explore, learn, practice, and make choices about what it means to be productive, contributing members of the community. Here are some examples:

- ✦ Access to a librarian and a comfortable place to read
- ✦ Time working on a hobby with an adult mentor
- ✦ A part-time job with an employer who teaches and models skill development and a strong work ethic
- ✦ Planned time with grandparents or other elders to help with odd jobs or simply visit
- ✦ Music lessons
- ✦ Exploring museums or cultural centers
- ✦ Supervised playground time
- ✦ Conversations with friends in an adult-supervised café or coffee shop
- ✦ Fun at a skate park
- ✦ Working out with a friend and her dad or mom
- ✦ Summer camp
- ✦ Community sports leagues
- ✦ Parks and Recreation programs
- ✦ Youth theater
- ✦ Creating public works of art
- ✦ Youth-in-Government activities
- ✦ Community gardening projects



Introduction

Minnesota has a long tradition as a great place to raise a family. In addition to supporting academic achievement through strong schools, many communities also provide developmental opportunities for children and youth during the hours when they are without structure or supervision. Annually, each young person has about 2,000 hours of this “discretionary” time, roughly equivalent to a full-time job.²

During this out-of-school time, as it is often called, youth begin their journeys into our communities. These journeys include a wide range of programs and activities available to young people in family homes, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA/YWCAs, sports clubs, schools, and other community settings. While the specific activities and physical environments vary, the developmentally focused experiences that are available during this time are united by a shared goal: creating enriching experiences in a variety of content areas through which interests can be nurtured, skills tested and perfected, teamwork and leadership learned, and decision making experienced. These competencies are critical for young people and for the communities in which they will be active as adults. For far too many youth in many of our communities, these

opportunities for learning and development are not accessible, of good quality, or actively chosen by youth.

Recently, new research findings about how human minds develop have made it clear that these types of activities are even more important than originally thought. It has long been recognized by educators and experts in child and youth development that out-of-school time opportunities help young people make new friends, learn skills, develop competencies, and experience themselves as valued and valuable. What has become clear, though, is that when these things are happening, important, life-long changes are also taking place in the brain. Capacities for planning, decision making, and foreseeing consequences, among other important functions, may become “hardwired,” thanks to the experiences young people have in programs and activities in the community.

In an atmosphere of growing recognition about the many skills and competencies necessary to ensure that young people across Minnesota communities become contributing adults, University of Minnesota President Robert Bruininks called for the creation of the Minnesota Commission on Out-of-School Time. Through the establishment of the Presidential Initiative on Children, Youth, and Families, President Bruininks committed to convening community leaders and experts across disciplines to identify how Minnesota could best support the healthy growth and development of its young people in their journey from early childhood through middle childhood and adolescence. The Commission was envisioned as a strategy to identify critical investments in children and youth from kindergarten through adolescence, building on and bridging across a sound early developmental foundation.

² Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. (1992). *A matter of time: Risk and opportunity in the non-school hours*. New York: Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development.

In creating the Commission, President Bruininks invited the participation of experts in the fields of child and adolescent development, as well as representatives of business, philanthropy, youth development programs, and county, state, and tribal government. Recognized Minnesota leaders in communications and philanthropy led the Commission. The charge was to create a vision and strategies to ensure every Minnesota youth has access to opportunities to support their optimal development during non-school hours; a charge reinforced by research findings that confirm the critical role of high-quality out-of-school time opportunities in ensuring that children and youth reach adulthood ready to assume their roles as responsible community members and leaders.

Through a series of work groups, meetings, and dialogues this intergenerational group identified a vision for out-of-school time in Minnesota, key issues facing families, young people, program providers, and policy makers, and a series of recommendations. This report provides an overview and summary of the Commission's work, and offers concrete action strategies for ensuring that Minnesota is a great place for young people, families, and communities.

The Vision

By the year 2020, Minnesota will be recognized as the premier state where:

Every young person chooses to become engaged.

Youth choose to be actively engaged in their own development and learning in the non-school hours. Systems and expectations are in place to support young people having authentic voice in what is available in communities and ways of finding and shaping the activities right for them.

Every family has access to high-quality opportunities.

Families understand the importance of opportunities in the non-school hours and have systems that support both their accessing and contributing to affordable learning and development opportunities for their children and the broader community.

Every community has a clear plan and adequate support.

Minnesota communities work together and on their own to develop and implement plans that meet the growing need of young people and families for learning and development opportunities in the non-school hours. They stimulate collaborations, leverage resources, and generate the kinds of opportunities that community members want and value. Communities invite business and government leaders, schools, youth agencies, faith communities, seniors, and neighbors to join with young people in supporting their development and enhancing their communities.

Every program has supports needed to ensure quality.

Programs, organizations, and collaborations sponsor high-quality experiences staffed with trained, caring professionals and volunteers. A statewide system of training and technical assistance recruits, promotes, and rewards both professional staff and volunteers. Quality standards are agreed upon and supports are available to help programs focus on quality and the development of productive young people who contribute to their communities.

An effective and efficient public/private partnership stimulates, supports, and sustains opportunities in all communities for all young people.

A strong and diverse statewide operating system for collaboration and networking is a catalyst for education and training, evaluation and accountability, resource development and sustainability, advocacy and public policy formulation for community-based youth-development experiences. An effective system of public and private funding creates leverage and incentives for high-quality, accessible opportunities for all youth. The public-private funding system enhances resource stability and growth potential for structured programs, organizations, and collaborations in the state.

Our citizens understand and support the value of these opportunities for learning and development.

The public – people of all ages – understands and enthusiastically supports constructive opportunities that engage youth and help them become productive workers, responsible citizens, caring people, and effective leaders.

The Case

HOW OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME OPPORTUNITIES HELP YOUNG MINDS GROW

Just as protein and good fats help baby and toddler brains grow, positive experiences in communities enable adolescent brains to develop optimally.

New brain research shows that the human brain is still physically maturing and will continue to do so into a person's early- to mid-twenties. Events in a person's life during those times when the brain is growing most rapidly largely determine which connections become strong and well established, and which do not. Out-of-school time experiences can have a significant positive influence on this process.

Positive out-of-school time engagement is so important because it can't be mimicked in school or at home. Parents and schools remain key, of course, in part because they help facilitate children's learning and connections with others. In out-of-school activities, however, young people are more often making independent choices and thus putting into practice what has been nurtured at home and in school. Children and youth involved in high-quality youth development activities have critical opportunities to make choices about what to do with their time, with whom to engage, and how to practice social, cognitive, and other skills. This doesn't happen once in a while in an activity randomly planned and staffed; it happens over time when positive experiences and relationships are nurtured and sustained. It happens when the adults involved help the young people develop competencies, find meaning in their lives, and build a foundation for adult thinking and behaviors. Along with parents and educators,

high-quality programs help young people develop the capacity for becoming engaged in society and making a positive difference in their communities.

Yet even before these startling new discoveries, many saw firsthand the benefits of involving children and youth in out-of-school time activities. Young people, staff, and volunteers enjoy their time together, and many families rely on them as nurturing, constructive, safe alternatives to young people being home alone or just “hanging out.” Other studies support the positive anecdotal evidence: Young people who take part in structured community opportunities have better school attendance, better grades, more positive attitudes toward school, and higher aspirations for post-secondary education.³ There are long-term effects as well. Adults who as young people participate in activities outside of the regular school day are more likely to:⁴

Trust their parents.

Settle in stable relationships.

Be employed.

Report being happy with their lives.

Be active in their communities.

Because of the significance of these outcomes, it is in the public interest to support families in accessing these out-of-school time opportunities and to stimulate communities in creating and sustaining them.

³ See, for example, Huang, D., Gribbons, B., Kim, K. S., Lee, C., & Baker, E. L. (2000). *A decade of results: The impact of the LA's BEST after school enrichment initiative on subsequent student achievement and performance*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California at Los Angeles, Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, Center for the Study of Evaluation; and Hamilton, L. S., & Klein, S. P. (1998). *Achievement test score gains among participants in the foundations school-age enrichment program*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp.

⁴ Gambone, M. A., Klem, A. M., & Connell, J. P. (2002). *Finding out what matters for youth: Testing key links in a community action framework for youth development*. Philadelphia, PA: Youth Development Strategies, Inc. and the Institute for Research and Reform in Education.

⁵ Jaskin Baker, A., and Moen, D. (2004). *The Minnesota youth caucus on out-of-school time: Report on proceedings*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Minnesota Commission on Out-of-School Time.

YOUTH EXPLORE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

In addition to gathering input from youth through a survey and eight youth focus groups, the Commission heard directly from young people through the Minnesota Youth Caucus on Out-of-School Time. Youth leaders and adults from around the state came together as a caucus to discuss community youth involvement issues in more depth and to create a series of recommendations to inform the Commission's proceedings.

Before the Caucus, each of the 20 invited youth was asked to interview three peers who were not involved in out-of-school time programs. During the caucus, youth reviewed the peer interview data and identified themes and issues of this group of “non-participating” youth. A summary of their findings is published in a Commission document titled “The Minnesota youth caucus on out-of-school time: Report on proceedings.”⁵ Themes and findings from the Caucus were used along with the data from previously conducted surveys and focus groups as the research base to develop the Commission's final strategy recommendations.

The Issues

AVAILABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

Across Minnesota, there are examples of excellent youth development programs staffed by skilled, highly qualified adult leaders. It is too common, however, to find opportunity gaps. In some areas, for example, there are simply not enough appealing choices to engage the majority of children and youth – especially those who are less likely to choose to participate. Barriers such as cost, lack of reliable transportation, or responsibilities at home (e.g., care for younger siblings) prevent some youth and families from accessing opportunities. In addition, religious affiliation, cultural or ethnic considerations, sexual orientation, or physical or mental challenges can leave some young people feeling uncomfortable or unwelcome among their peers in community settings.

A key challenge is that there is no single organization or system working to ensure that communities across the state are able to maximize the potential of the out-of-school hours. Rather, a variety of individuals, associations, and systems all contribute in significant but uncoordinated ways. One result is a lack of long-term stability, systematic planning, and integrated thinking when it comes to efforts to stimulate, support, and fund positive opportunities in our communities. Organizations may unintentionally duplicate efforts or miss opportunities for collaboration. Likewise, government spending on youth development opportunities is fragmented and distributed among an array of different entities, some of which focus exclusively on reducing risks rather than building strengths.

Part of the problem is that information about the critical nature of out-of-school time activities has not been widely distributed among policy makers and the general public. Decisions about funding are therefore made without important contextual information. Prior to the budget crises that impacted states across the country in the last two years, Minnesota had been steadily expanding and enhancing after-school programs for children and youth. Community Education, school-age care programs, 4-H (through the University of Minnesota Extension Service), and foundation-supported community programs were continuing to grow and stabilize. In addition to the funds and levy authority provided for Community Education and school-age care programs, Minnesota had added the Governor's After-School Enrichment Program in the mid-1990s, providing approximately \$5 million annually in competitive grants to partnerships of school and community organizations to reach youth not engaged in enriching activities during non-school hours.

In 2003, the state budget crisis resulted in the elimination of the Governor's After-School Program, reductions in state funds for Community Education, and pressure on school districts to prioritize use of levies for school-day programming associated with achievement. At the same time, funds for child care, crime prevention, tobacco prevention, arts, and athletics were reduced at state and community levels. Out-of-school time programs lacked a method to galvanize community support and did not have a united voice in the face of diminishing resources.

Ripple effects from these budget reductions continue to impact local programming, with services diminishing in number and scope, and some programs closing their doors. A study by the Minnesota Council on Foundations on issues and challenges of youth development funding in Minnesota concludes that, “After-school programming is one of the most critically underfunded youth development program areas...with dire long-term costs and consequences for the state.”⁶ A University survey of 14 of 44 After-School Enrichment Grant programs unallotted during the budget crisis mirrored the Minnesota Council on Foundations’ findings: programs reduced hours of service, reduced staffing levels, eliminated transportation, and – in some cases – closed their doors.⁷

It is not known how many of the families who benefited from and counted on these programs found alternatives. What we do know is that Minnesota is home to 950,000 young people and has the highest percentage in the country of children ages 10-12 in self-care most afternoons.⁸ Given our new understanding of brain development and the impact of high-quality programs, we realize that these young people often are not simply missing out on community activities, but also opportunities for optimal development.

Equally troubling is that during site visits to a group of randomly selected Minnesota com-

munities, researcher Rebecca Saito found that an estimated 50 percent of young people were not participating in any structured after-school programs.⁹ In addition, early results from Tufts University’s new longitudinal study indicate that while 96 percent of young people have participated at some point, they have done so only sporadically.¹⁰

The risk of having a significant portion of Minnesota’s children and youth at home alone on a regular basis without positive things to do and places to be, is that these hours of opportunity will turn into hours of risk or stagnation. The Commission believes that the vision articulated in this report more accurately portrays what Minnesota citizens collectively want for our children, youth, families, and communities.

⁶ Minnesota Council on Foundations. (2004). *Supporting Minnesota’s youth: The state of the state’s youth development funding. Appendix VII*. Minneapolis: Author.

⁷ Minnesota Commission on Out-of-School Time. (2004). *Sustainability of out-of-school time programs*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Minnesota Commission on Out-of-School Time.

⁸ Capizzano, J., Tout, K., & Adams, G. (2000). *Child care patterns of school-age children with employed mothers*. Research report retrieved November 11, 2003, from the Urban Institute: <http://www.urban.org>

⁹ Saito, R. N. (2004). *Listening to young people’s perspectives on out-of-school time*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Minnesota Commission on Out-of-School Time.

¹⁰ Jackie Lerner, co-investigator of the National Longitudinal Study on 4-H Positive Youth Development, stated in a scheduled research chat hosted by the Center for 4-H Youth Development, University of Minnesota Extension Service, Minneapolis, on April 7, 2005, that current findings indicate that of young people across the country, 96 percent participate sporadically in out-of-school time activities.

Core Commitments to Young People and Communities

Despite the aforementioned budget cuts, Minnesota still has a powerful variety of youth development opportunities sponsored by youth-serving organizations, faith communities, school districts, sports programs, parks and recreation departments, fraternal organizations, nonprofit community agencies, and private sector organizations. Many of these use limited public funds and are driven by volunteers and private contributions. It is also the case, however, that these programs and activities are neither equitably distributed nor equally accessible. In addition to the barriers described earlier, most programs are inadequately funded, meaning that corners are cut and scholarship funds aren't always available to families who are unable to afford participation fees.

Those who have studied the issue believe that the foundation that is needed is a clearly articulated community-wide set of commitments. The Commission formulated the following six. Minnesota must commit to:

Meet the developmental needs of children and youth for the first two decades of their lives.

Take a positive, asset-based approach to child and youth development.

Ensure access for all to high-quality, developmental opportunities.

Create and support youth-adult partnerships and significant youth roles in non-school programs and community planning.

Require accountability at program, community, and state levels that supports a continuous-improvement approach.

Support out-of-school time opportunities through a combination of family, private, and public contributions.

Meet the developmental needs of children and youth for the first two decades of their lives.

Two decades is about what it takes for the brain's sensitive architecture to grow, organize, redefine, and stabilize. Because this is an ongoing process, there is no single age range or time period upon which our investments can be exclusively focused. Early childhood investments are, for example, essential and cost-effective. They lay important groundwork for what is to come. School-age investments in literacy, mathematics, science, and other basic academic skills are likewise essential. Their potential is only maximized (and not undermined), however, when they are complemented by opportunities in the non-school hours. This would require that in addition to supporting schools, families, and early childhood programs and services, priority is placed on offering high-quality experiences that appeal to the different interests and developmental needs of young people. With an array of possibilities available, parents would then be able to guide their children toward attractive, appropriate options and young people themselves would have better choices.

Take a positive, asset-based approach to child and youth development.

High-quality opportunities actively engage young people in their own development. Regardless of who they are or where they come from, all young people need these kinds of experiences. The Commission therefore urges a "raising of the bar" in terms of strategies used across the state to assess and improve quality. Effective indicators can illustrate the power of quality to the public and make the case for developing intentional opportunities rather than just hoping for serendipitous learning experiences. Safety alone is not enough.

Ensure access for all to high-quality, developmental opportunities.

Math wiz-kids and creative types and kinesthetic learners and those who struggle academically all benefit from positive youth development experiences and relationships. The key to long-term success in helping all youth have and make positive choices is ensuring that communities have the mechanisms and resources to plan, coordinate,

implement, and sustain multiple relevant, positive, age-appropriate opportunities.

Create and support youth-adult partnerships and significant youth roles in non-school programs and community planning.

Adults too often underestimate how much young people are able and willing to contribute significantly to their own learning and development as well as to our communities. Young people, like most people, become authentically engaged when they have a voice in the selection, creation, and implementation of how they spend their time. Having voice and roles is especially critical in community activities where children, youth, and families can and do choose where to go and what to do.

Require accountability at program, community, and state levels that supports a continuous-improvement approach.

Good citizenship and stewardship of public resources and private investments requires a commitment to accountability at several levels. Sponsoring agencies, organizations, and community programs benefit from practical, useful tools that help them identify goals and outcomes, plan programs, engage young people actively, assess progress, and improve efforts over time. Furthermore, the entire state benefits from accountability approaches that assess our collective progress in engaging youth, helping them make positive choices about how to spend their time, improving the quality and availability of opportunities, and promoting strategies that work while eliminating those that are ineffective.

Support out-of-school time opportunities through a combination of family, private, and public contributions.

There are measurable benefits for three primary beneficiaries: families, communities, and the public. Communities feel the quality-of-life and economic benefits of young

people contributing to daily communal life. Families benefit as parents and young people experience opportunities for development that no family or school could provide on its own. The public and government at all levels benefit when agencies and services work with citizens committed to solving problems before they are intractable.

Ensuring community opportunities for youth should, therefore, be a shared investment. Resources can include participation fees, volunteer time, in-kind donations, costs underwritten by businesses, and major sponsorship through corporate and foundation grants. In addition, there are and ought to be more investments in out-of-school opportunities by federal, state, and local funding sources. Currently, these monies are often targeted toward preventing problem behaviors or increasing academic achievement outcomes, and there is a notable lack of consistency in how they are distributed. The unpredictable availability of programs and opportunities for children when they are not in school is a limitation for youth, frustration to parents, and disincentive to attracting qualified staff. It is essential to understand the kind of policies and funding alternatives needed to create sustainable opportunities. Communities are challenged to find a steady, balanced stream of reliable multi-year funding options to maintain learning opportunities. Collaborations, through which funds can be maximized and resources shared, are important. Making the Commission's vision a reality will require a new mixture of family, private, and public resources for success. We must ensure that we are not reinventing the wheel as we work to establish a new, clearer interdependence that increases overall resources, leverages available resources in optimal ways, advances age-appropriate opportunities, closes opportunity gaps, and assures quality.

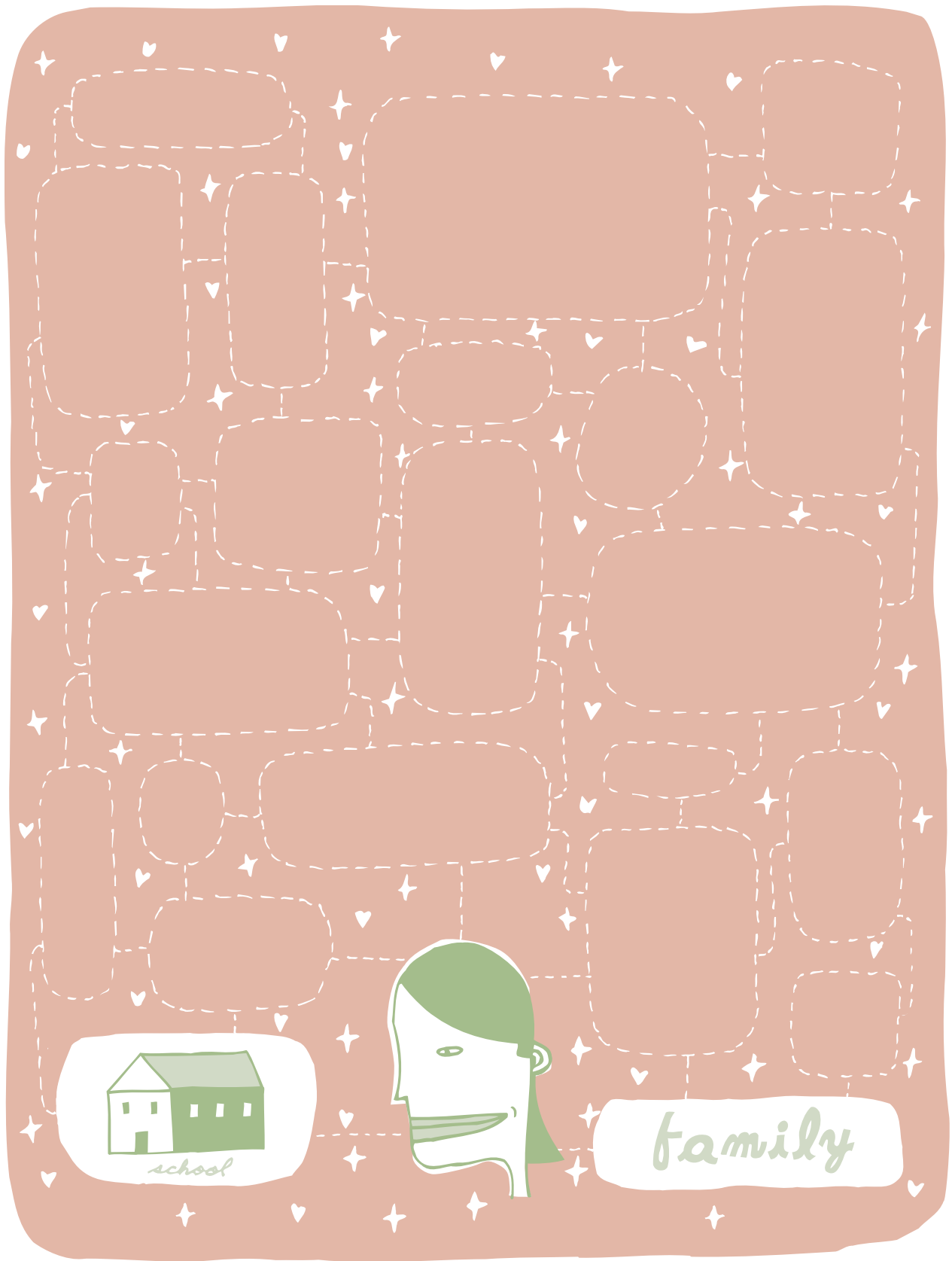
For these three stakeholder groups, the actual costs of funding a strong coordinated youth development effort become manageable when shared. If implemented, the strategies outlined in this report would create new energy, creativity, and working capital to enhance and expand opportunities.

Summary

A philosophical and ideological commitment to youth development exists. Many ordinary citizens understand that an investment in children and youth is an investment in healthy communities for all. They see that we collectively reap the rewards when young people are constructively engaged in safe, healthy, productive opportunities after school, on weekends, during the summers, and on holidays. In fact, nine out of ten voters polled in a national survey recognize that their states are facing serious budget deficits but continue to believe in the importance of providing organized activities and environments for young people during these times. Seven out of ten say that these kinds of community opportunities are an absolute necessity.¹¹

The secret to “walking the talk” – helping Minnesotans act on their beliefs about the importance of out-of-school time opportunities – is really no secret: we must increase both demand and supply. In other words, we need to reach all young people, especially those who are not currently involved, and we need to ensure that when we reach them we have appropriate and desirable opportunities from which they can choose. It is time to invest greater attention, energy, and resources in non-school opportunities so that employers understand and emphasize these experiences in hiring, parents see benefits beyond safety, schools see benefits beyond academic achievement, and the public at large understands the added value for communities. The quality of life in Minnesota depends on the creativity, knowledge, inclusive spirit, and active engagement of all its citizens during all hours of the day.

¹¹ Afterschool Alliance. (2002). *Afterschool alert: Poll report on findings of the 2002 nationwide poll of registered voters on afterschool programs*. Retrieved January 12, 2005, from <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org>





Recommendations and Action Strategies

The recommendations and action strategies that follow are designed to bring life to the vision set out by the Commission, honor essential commitments to Minnesota youth, and provide a direction for the journey ahead. As such, they provide a road map of what the commissioners believe can and should be done in Minnesota to ensure that all young persons have access to engaging opportunities to learn and grow during the non-school hours as they venture out into our communities.

Overall, the recommendations and action strategies have several common themes:

- ✦ They acknowledge and hold up the right and responsibility of young people and families to determine how non-school hours are used to promote the development, learning, and citizenship of young people.
- ✦ They seek to support communities in playing useful roles and fulfilling their responsibilities for the development and learning of young people.
- ✦ They focus on stimulating and supporting communities by building a successful statewide network and coordinated systems to maximize collaboration, minimize duplication, increase effectiveness, and avoid creation of a new bureaucracy.
- ✦ They encourage flexible, incentive-driven, practical approaches that add value to what exists, yet also expand opportunities and reach new audiences.
- ✦ They are designed to both encourage demand for opportunities and increase supply while opening access, assuring quality, and increasing accountability.

Because a sustainable, statewide effort will require approaching the issue from many different angles, the recommendations and their related action strategies also approach it from different directions. Some are focused on gaining an even better understanding of what is available and what is needed, others address the bottom line of how to pay for it all, and still others look at how to effectively engage the appropriate stakeholders in the process. Each strategy has been assigned a word that links it to a particular type of action, as described on the next page:

Action Strategies

STUDY

Further study a topic in order to better inform future strategic actions.

FUND

Provide ongoing, sustainable funding to directly or indirectly support communities' and programs' operational budgets – not new infrastructure or field-building activities.

INVEST

Invest fiscal resources to develop a new capacity or infrastructure designed to stimulate and support the growth of youth engagement; these are not direct program funds.

UNITE

Unite in efforts to become more effective and efficient so we are more powerful than individual groups or people acting alone.

POLICY

Work to create or reform operational policies that improve coordination, sustain resources, stimulate new opportunities, and enhance public support.

EMPOWER

Engage youth and empower their efforts to lead in this critical area.

MOBILIZE

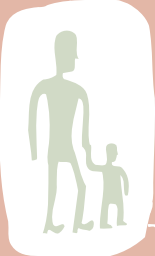
Mobilize efforts to inform people and move them to action in critical ways.



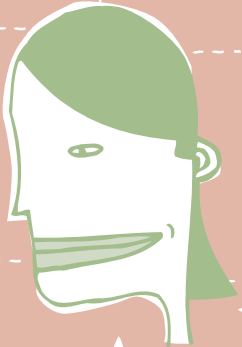
Whether or not we as a state are successful in implementing the changes called for in this document should ultimately be judged by the extent to which more youth make positive choices and become engaged in challenging community-based youth development opportunities – opportunities that positively impact their learning, development, and citizenship. In short, these recommendations seek to help Minnesota build a more intentional approach to engaging young people from ages 5 to 18 so that they can become responsible and productive community members of tomorrow.



COMMUNITY



school



family

1

Encourage Positive Choices

CREATE STRONG INCENTIVES AND SUPPORTS TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES CHOOSE APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES.

INVEST – Create and support a comprehensive, technology-enhanced system to help young people and families know what opportunities are available.

STUDY – Study the choices young people and families make in relation to the type and level of opportunities available in different communities.

EMPOWER – Establish a periodic statewide community survey process to systematically canvas youth and families about their interests in different types of opportunities.

UNITE – Unite around and invest in family-friendly, technology-enhanced, incentive-driven, and policy-supported mechanisms that help young people and families make, record, and benefit from their positive choices.

MOBILIZE – Encourage teachers and other adults who work with young people and families to ask about, suggest, and support positive out-of-school time choices.

1 *Encourage Positive Choices*

CREATE STRONG INCENTIVES AND SUPPORTS TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES CHOOSE APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES.

The right and responsibility for choices in the non-school hours belongs first and foremost to young people and their families. Ideally, a young person, with help and support from adult family members, selects opportunities for reasons important to the individual or family. The activities can reflect the dreams and interests of the child as well as the hopes and values of the family. Communities cannot dictate what young people do or where they are during these hours. Doing so would result in the loss of one of the unique values of this time for development – the power to choose. Rather, the community’s responsibility lies in three areas: supporting positive choices by young people and families; ensuring the quality of the opportunities available; and guaranteeing access for all. It takes care, planning, initiative, and resources to do those three things successfully, but the benefit is more intentional and deliberate decision making by families, which results in better opportunities and experiences for young people.

The Commission believes the following strategies can significantly help young people and families make positive choices for the future.

INVEST

CREATE AND SUPPORT A COMPREHENSIVE, TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED SYSTEM TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES KNOW WHAT OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE.

Simply finding out what opportunities are available and how to access them is a major barrier for many youth and families. Creating a technology-enhanced and efficient way to gather and access such information across organizations holds great promise if it effectively bridges the digital divide – the gap between those for whom technology is a part of daily life and those for whom it is rarely or never used, and the more subtle aspects, such as Internet culture, that may in themselves be alienating if unfamiliar. This could be done in part by using a range of technologies from print to Web sites, to ensure information is available when and where needed by families. Creating standards and expectations for the type of information gathered and establishing a predictable process for gathering it would advance the impact of this effort.

Providing incentives for organizations to submit and regularly update information, as well as for youth to help map the opportunities in their communities, could significantly accelerate implementation statewide. The system could also include mechanisms such as scholarship applications on-line, special giveaways, or other means of rewarding positive choices and making them easier and more frequent.

STUDY

STUDY THE CHOICES YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES MAKE IN RELATION TO THE TYPE AND LEVEL OF OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE IN DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES.

If we are to expect families and young people to choose wisely, we must better understand how and why they choose different options in different communities. Since communities vary widely in what opportunities are available, these choices must be understood in community context – whether urban, suburban, exurban, or rural. Systematic study and use of the results, partly enabled by implementation of the strategy above, would enhance the development of a more responsive and effective system. Community-level assessments might help create better choices for families and youth. Such assessments might include the range of opportunities in a community,

the adequacy for different age groups, and even quality. Assessments could also help target limited resources as well as assess progress over time within a community as well as across the state. Reliable measures could also help market what communities offer to families.

EMPOWER

ESTABLISH A PERIODIC STATEWIDE COMMUNITY SURVEY PROCESS TO SYSTEMATICALLY CANVAS YOUTH AND FAMILIES ABOUT THEIR INTERESTS IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF OPPORTUNITIES.

If communities, organizations, and individuals are to respond effectively to young people's interests and create appropriate opportunities, they must better understand what interests youth have. If youth are to actively make choices, they need to be authentically involved in influencing what is available. *A survey designed and implemented with and by youth* to help capture young people's interests in learning and development opportunities could prove helpful in both areas. Results could provide stimulus to organizations and individuals to create such opportunities as well as assess the demand for opportunities the community is considering. Results could also help establish peer support for participation and better align supply and demand in this field. The activities of surveying also provide wonderful learning opportunities for youth. This idea came directly from the Youth Caucus held as part of the Commission's work.

UNITE

UNITE AROUND AND INVEST IN FAMILY-FRIENDLY, TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED, INCENTIVE-DRIVEN, AND POLICY-SUPPORTED MECHANISMS THAT HELP YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES MAKE, RECORD, AND BENEFIT FROM THEIR POSITIVE CHOICES.

Minnesotans should actively seek to unite around and invest in creating mechanisms that encourage a range of positive choices. These could include such technology-enhanced mechanisms as e-portfolios to record and reflect on experiences in which young people engage. Research on experiential learning supports the importance of reflecting on and capturing experiences for maximum benefit. Thus, such systems could both provide a record for use by others

and enhance the benefits of experiences for youth. Other mechanisms might include the creation of individual "dream accounts" or "opportunity charge cards" where youth, families, and friends can earn points or provide funds to help youth realize their dreams through quality out-of-school opportunities. Such cards or accounts could also feed into e-portfolios with points given for experiences entered. Such accounts or cards provide a way to help youth and families save for opportunities of a more expensive or elaborate nature than they might otherwise be able to afford. At the same time, they provide valuable lessons in saving for and investing in one's dreams. They could also serve as a mechanism to implement scholarship funding policies. If fully implemented, they could even provide a new type of currency to help fund programs that meet specific standards. Such mechanisms could also provide a base for the provision of incentives to youth as well as families for being engaged positively.

MOBILIZE

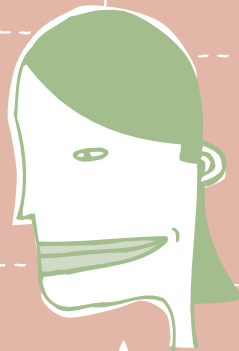
ENCOURAGE TEACHERS AND OTHER ADULTS WHO WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES TO ASK ABOUT, SUGGEST, AND SUPPORT POSITIVE OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME CHOICES.

Teachers and others who interact regularly with young people often have insights into the nature and types of opportunities that young people need or from which they would benefit. The people working with children and youth should be encouraged to help families and young people make choices that will improve their learning, strengthen their physical, social, cognitive, and emotional abilities, and help young people become actively engaged in their own learning and development. Such advice should not be mandatory or imposed but rather offered in a spirit of support for constructive use of time and community resources. It could be part of regular teacher-parent conferences, special community "opportunity fairs" at school, or advice to young people. It could integrate with school service-learning and community service projects but should not be limited to them. One can imagine a day when young people are encouraged to explore opportunities for the use of their out-of-school time just as they are encouraged to explore career possibilities when they graduate – with help from friends, parents, teachers, counselors, publications, and technology all tied to helping them make better choices.

HOME



COMMUNITY



family

2

Increase the Participation of Children and Youth to 100 Percent

ENSURE HIGH-QUALITY COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES AND PROGRAMS ARE AVAILABLE TO ALL.

UNITE – Unite and mobilize Minnesota communities around clear and common goals of increasing the number of engaged youth to at least 80 percent by 2010 and 100 percent by 2020.

MOBILIZE – Mobilize parents, youth workers, family members, community organizations, and volunteers to come together and create informal activities and connections in communities that support development and become the factors that strong, more structured programs depend on for success.

INVEST – Invest in scholarships and systems to ensure that youth with limited financial resources have access to the full range of learning and development opportunities in the community.

POLICY – Establish new state policies that support the creation of “youth opportunity zones” where organizations and families can receive special grants or fee waivers for creating sustainable, positive learning opportunities.

INVEST – Invest in growing the number and variety of youth workers who can work effectively with diverse, isolated, and hard-to-reach communities and with disengaged young people.

STUDY – Explore options and provide incentives for enhancing youth participation using technology to connect isolated or homebound young people to virtual adventures, homework help, on-line clubs, and other safe and developmentally appropriate Web-based learning activities.

2 Increase the Participation of Children and Youth to 100 Percent

ENSURE HIGH-QUALITY COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES AND PROGRAMS ARE AVAILABLE TO ALL.

Differences between majority and minority cultures, safety, and a wide variety of other factors affect whether young people and families are aware of available opportunities and feel they are appropriate for them. There is evidence that such access issues are a significant barrier for many school-age young people.

While all children and youth benefit from experiences that allow them to practice critical skills and roles they will take on as adults, young people most at risk and least engaged in constructive efforts are the ones to benefit the most.¹² Since the community benefits when young people are constructively rather than destructively engaged, the citizens of Minnesota would be wise to stimulate and support engaging opportunities in ways that make them accessible to all young people in all our communities.

We must pay particular attention to reaching isolated youth in the poorest or most culturally isolated towns and neighborhoods where need is intense and work can be complicated by language, cultural, and economic differences, as well as unstable housing and challenging life circumstances. These young people need not only critical services but also positive opportunities to learn and contribute. We cannot afford to write off large segments of our changing Minnesota population of young people or see a services-only approach as adequate. We must find ways to involve those young people who have family responsibilities in non-school hours, those who think it is not cool to participate, and those whose economic or social circumstances limit how their families can support their engagement. We must find ways to understand and learn from different cultural perspectives and develop opportunities within as well as across cultural, ethnic, economic, and religious communities. It is toward this end that the following action strategies are directed.

¹² For more detailed discussions, see *Mentoring: A promising strategy for youth development* by Jekielek, Moore, et al. (Washington, DC: Child Trends, February 2002), and *Getting to positive outcomes for children and childcare: A summary of two workshops* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2001).

UNITE

UNITE AND MOBILIZE MINNESOTA COMMUNITIES AROUND CLEAR AND COMMON GOALS OF INCREASING THE NUMBER OF ENGAGED YOUTH TO AT LEAST 80 PERCENT BY 2010 AND 100 PERCENT BY 2020.

Minnesota must once again assume its role as a leader in providing essential elements for the success of its young people – from early child care to education to youth development opportunities in our communities. To do this, the state needs a clear and ambitious goal that recognizes the need for young people to become engaged in their own learning and development – not just in school, but in communities during the non-school hours. The Commission believes that we must dramatically improve our measures of engagement, how we hold ourselves accountable, and how we mobilize and unite to ensure that Minnesota’s children and youth ages 5 to 18 are actively engaged in their own learning and development through participation in positive, high-quality out-of-school time experiences – experiences that they and their families choose. Just as important as reaching a goal for the percent of youth engaged during the non-school hours, is establishing a floor for non-engagement that is unacceptable to all Minnesotans. When communities have too low a percentage of youth engaged, it should call into action a variety of special supports – such as those described throughout this report.

MOBILIZE

MOBILIZE PARENTS, YOUTH WORKERS, FAMILY MEMBERS, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, AND VOLUNTEERS TO COME TOGETHER AND CREATE INFORMAL ACTIVITIES AND CONNECTIONS IN COMMUNITIES THAT SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT AND BECOME THE FACTORS THAT STRONG, MORE STRUCTURED PROGRAMS DEPEND ON FOR SUCCESS.

As important as it is to make sure all youth have access to high-quality, formal community opportunities, it is also critical we collectively mobilize to provide the other type of engagement – positive informal opportunities for youth to learn and contribute. As the work of Search Institute has more than demonstrated, we need asset building in every aspect of our young people’s experiences. While much of this report focuses on the more structured opportunities

we often call programs, the Commission wishes to highlight the need for Minnesotans to rally together and create the norms, expectations, climate, and culture that make it a priority to connect with young people in caring, positive, and challenging ways. Many lessons can be learned from the variety of existing efforts around the state and the nation, such as Search Institute’s Healthy Community • Healthy Youth Initiatives and America’s Promise Communities of Promise.¹³

INVEST

INVEST IN SCHOLARSHIPS AND SYSTEMS TO ENSURE THAT YOUTH WITH LIMITED FINANCIAL RESOURCES HAVE ACCESS TO THE FULL RANGE OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE COMMUNITY.

Minnesota families and youth of limited means must have access to the financial resources needed to select and participate in a range of opportunities. The system for accessing these scholarships should be designed to reduce any stigma attached to requesting assistance, enhance positive choices, reward family involvement, and support providers who agree to accept scholarships for their programs. Ideally, the scholarship system and the availability of “opportunity charge cards” would be connected and provide multiple ways for young people, families, neighbors, government, philanthropy, corporations, organizations, employers, and other sponsors to contribute resources to a child’s “opportunity account,” thus creating a new basis for exchange – exchanges that can only be used for approved programs and experiences.

POLICY

ESTABLISH NEW STATE POLICIES THAT SUPPORT THE CREATION OF “YOUTH OPPORTUNITY ZONES” WHERE ORGANIZATIONS AND FAMILIES CAN RECEIVE SPECIAL GRANTS OR FEE WAIVERS FOR CREATING SUSTAINABLE, POSITIVE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES.

Just as other policies have helped to create new economic opportunities in communities, the idea behind youth

opportunity zones is to create ways to overcome barriers to creating learning opportunities for youth in communities that meet a set of criteria. The criteria would be developed along with the policy but might include the number of opportunities available per youth, average family income, lack of facilities, or number of youth receiving free or reduced school lunches. The incentives could include additional scholarships or opportunity charge cards for residents, special loans from a bonding bill to support facilities for communities where needed, grants to organizations willing to create new opportunities, and a variety of other mechanisms.

INVEST

INVEST IN GROWING THE NUMBER AND VARIETY OF YOUTH WORKERS WHO CAN WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH DIVERSE, ISOLATED, AND HARD-TO-REACH COMMUNITIES AND WITH DISENGAGED YOUNG PEOPLE.

In some communities and among some populations, reducing access barriers will in part require increasing the number and experience of caring volunteers and professionals who choose to work with local youth during out-of-school time. We must also enhance the ability of youth workers to work with diverse audiences and in rural and low-resource communities. This includes recruiting, training, and retaining youth workers whose racial, ethnic, and cultural background is similar to the youth they reach.

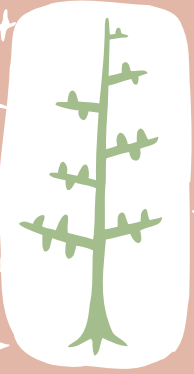
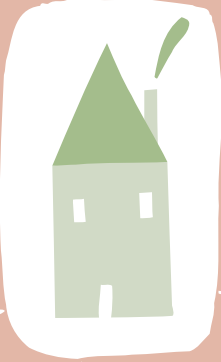
STUDY

EXPLORE OPTIONS AND PROVIDE INCENTIVES FOR ENHANCING YOUTH PARTICIPATION USING TECHNOLOGY TO CONNECT ISOLATED OR HOMEBOUND YOUNG PEOPLE TO VIRTUAL ADVENTURES, HOMEWORK HELP, ON-LINE CLUBS, AND OTHER SAFE AND DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE WEB-BASED LEARNING ACTIVITIES.

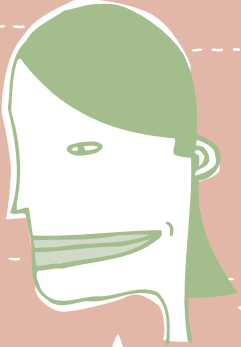
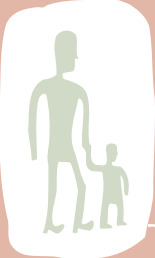
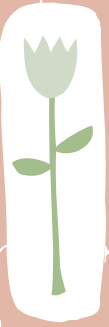
Just as we can use technology to enhance choices, Minnesota should also explore ways to use technology to enable isolated communities as well as isolated individuals to access virtual opportunities. While the digital divide is real, technology is also a powerful tool that can equalize opportunity access if used wisely. Developing opportunities and partnerships that communities, organizations, and families can utilize effectively holds promise that must be explored.

¹³ For more information, see <http://www.search-institute.org/communities/> and <http://www.americaspromise.org/community/index/cfm>.

HOME



COMMUNITY



family

3 *Assure Quality, Enhance Impact*

ASSURE THAT ALL COMMUNITIES HAVE WAYS TO UNDERSTAND, ASSESS, AND INCREASE THE QUALITY OF AGE-APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

MOBILIZE – Mobilize communication efforts to help the public understand and value quality in youth development programs, organizations, and practitioners.

EMPOWER – Create, resource, empower, and connect “Quality Improvement Teams” of young people and adults designed to assess the quality of community programs and to encourage use of best practices, technical assistance, and other continuous improvement strategies.

UNITE – Unite behind a comprehensive “Education and Training Alliance” designed to strengthen quality by assuring the coordination and availability of education, training, technical assistance, and professional development for adult volunteers and the professional staff who work with young people across the wide range of community programs and opportunities.

STUDY – Establish a new University – community collaborative initiative dedicated to generating useful research to understand and assess programs, practices, and professionals providing opportunities in the community during non-school time.

3 *Assure Quality, Enhance Impact*

ASSURE THAT ALL COMMUNITIES HAVE WAYS TO UNDERSTAND, ASSESS, AND INCREASE THE QUALITY OF AGE-APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

Research shows that the quality, duration, and intensity of youth development program opportunities matters. Young people do not become and stay engaged in opportunities that lack key elements. These elements affect the types of positive impacts on learning, growth, and development that young people experience. Yet the field of out-of-school opportunities has not yet developed adequate ways for people to understand, recognize, assess, or promote quality in the wide range of opportunities available to young people or in the people and organizations that work with young people – especially as young people grow older. If we want to assure the opportunities our young people experience are of high quality and enhance their development and learning by getting them engaged, the Commission believes we must focus more attention on efforts to understand, assess, and improve quality.

Since we know that quality matters and that simply opening places for youth to hang out can fail, Minnesota has to identify and implement strategies that create a cycle of continuous assessment and improvement as well as provide incentives for quality.

The action strategies that follow are designed to systematically enhance young people's and families' understanding of the value of quality, provide ways for communities to assess and improve program quality, and enhance the ways education can promote high-quality practices by those who work with young people.

MOBILIZE

MOBILIZE COMMUNICATION EFFORTS TO HELP THE PUBLIC UNDERSTAND AND VALUE QUALITY IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND PRACTITIONERS.

In order to improve quality we must help families, young people, and communities understand why it is important, what it looks like, and how it impacts participants. While additional study will be beneficial, enough is known to help organizations to mobilize groups around an education effort in this arena. It is necessary to get parents and young people to think about what happens during this time as providing essential elements of a good developmental “diet.” This time needs to become a basic meal, not just a time for optional snacks perceived to have little consequence for learning and development. Establishing recognized symbols or seals of approval for quality that are widely recognized and respected would help advance this work.

EMPOWER

CREATE, RESOURCE, EMPOWER, AND CONNECT “QUALITY IMPROVEMENT TEAMS” OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS DESIGNED TO ASSESS THE QUALITY OF COMMUNITY PROGRAMS AND TO ENCOURAGE USE OF BEST PRACTICES, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND OTHER CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES.

It is often said that young people vote with their feet – if they don't like something, they don't stay with it. Minnesota should pioneer an effort to help young people, working with caring adults, develop teams of youth and adults who help to assess the quality of the opportunities available in their communities. These teams could be supported by professional standards and procedures from national or state associations, but should not lose the value of directly involving young people in learning, visiting, and helping determine whether opportunities possess essential quality elements. For maximal benefit, a flexible but consistent effort connected across the state is desirable. Such an effort will allow clear communications, press coverage, and policy development while still utilizing local strengths and structures to implement it in communities.

UNITE

UNITE BEHIND A COMPREHENSIVE “EDUCATION AND TRAINING ALLIANCE” DESIGNED TO STRENGTHEN QUALITY BY ASSURING THE COORDINATION AND AVAILABILITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ADULT VOLUNTEERS AND THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF WHO WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE ACROSS THE WIDE RANGE OF COMMUNITY PROGRAMS AND OPPORTUNITIES.

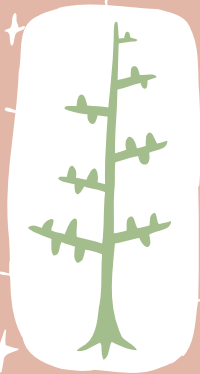
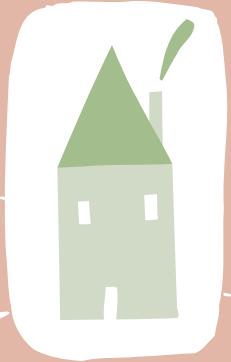
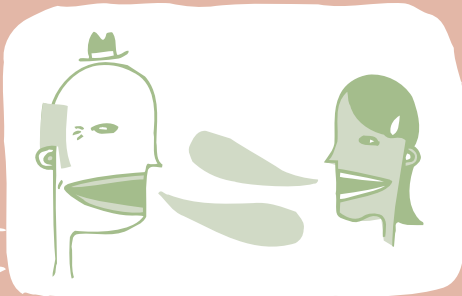
Although there are many different organizations, professional associations, and higher education institutions that provide learning opportunities for child and youth work staff, neither nationally nor in Minnesota are these efforts effectively coordinated or approved across a wide range of ages. This lack of coordination inhibits effective efforts to increase quality and intentionality. It also limits the pay scale and stability for people in these positions. Minnesota, unlike many states, has most of the essential elements for a comprehensive continuum of learning experiences, from short symposiums to mini-noncredit courses to certificates, undergraduate, and graduate degrees. Yet even Minnesota is failing to coordinate these strengths in a systematic way across those working with school-age and adolescent young people. The creation of a credible alliance of the full variety of providers of professional development (from organizations providing staff development opportunities to higher educational institutions) is an essential element for the successful engagement of Minnesota’s young people. The Out-of-School Time Partnership’s Field Support Work Group represents a sensible beginning for this effort but it will need additional resources and appropriate policies to support its growth and effectiveness as an alliance. The University of Minnesota, in particular, is well positioned across the state to help grow and support this professional education effort. By working with members of the Out-of-School Time Partnership, the Minnesota State College and University system, and private higher education institutions, it can help move forward this part of the public agenda for out-of-school time.

STUDY

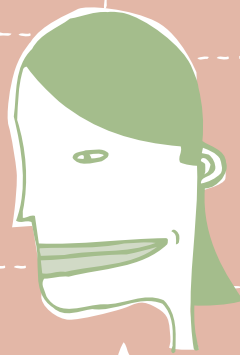
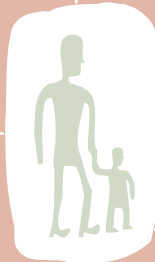
ESTABLISH A NEW UNIVERSITY – COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVE DEDICATED TO GENERATING USEFUL RESEARCH TO UNDERSTAND AND ASSESS PROGRAMS, PRACTICES, AND PROFESSIONALS PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE COMMUNITY DURING NON-SCHOOL TIME.

Just as coordinated educational efforts are essential, so is a deliberate and focused applied research agenda – one that helps stimulate research-inspired reflection by practitioners and addresses practice-inspired research by scholars. The study strategies noted throughout the report offer a useful starting point for this agenda – an agenda developed with citizens, practitioners, and program providers to address impact, quality, access, need, and implementation issues in our communities. The Minnesota Child Care Policy Research Partnership is an example and possible ally in building this new collaboration. Here again, the University of Minnesota, as the state’s premier research institution, is uniquely positioned to play a lead role. The researchers in multiple departments and colleges across the University who study important aspects of child and adolescent development and community contexts could and should be brought together with others from higher education and private research centers to significantly increase both the research productivity in this area and its direct application to and work with applied issues. Such work is consistent with the Presidential Initiative on Children, Youth, and Families that formed the basis for this Commission and now calls for interdisciplinary research that matters to the citizens of Minnesota. Such efforts should also include support for symposiums, conferences, and other gatherings that will help bridge research and practice perspectives in communities across the state – not just on campuses. The work of this collaboration should serve to increase public understanding, enhance competence of practitioners, stimulate further research, and inform policy debates.

HOME



COMMUNITY



family

4

Increase Community Capacity

BUILD MECHANISMS TO STIMULATE LOCAL PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION, SUSTAINABILITY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

STUDY – Invest in incentives for community collaborations to assess, map, plan, and support sustainable opportunities for their young people.

POLICY – Develop out-of-school time policies and funding streams that provide communities and programs with a predictable and sustainable level of public funding that is designed to stimulate access for all as well as effectively target families and communities most in need.

EMPOWER – Design and implement a youth engagement process that will bring youth, citizens, and program providers together to help individual communities assess the degree to which their communities are youth-development and family friendly.

4 *Increase Community Capacity*

BUILD MECHANISMS TO STIMULATE LOCAL PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION, SUSTAINABILITY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

Sustainability is fundamental to realizing the Commission's vision for engaging young people. The unpredictable availability of programs and opportunities for children when they are not in school is limiting for youth, frustrating to parents, and not consistent with attracting high-quality staff. Communities are challenged to find or create reliable multi-year funding options to maintain learning opportunities. It is essential to understand the kind of policies and funding alternatives needed to create sustainable opportunities.

The Commission is committed to a community-based approach to ensuring that opportunities are available to all youth where they live. The following action strategies are therefore designed to move Minnesota toward realizing the vision for and commitment to sustainable community-based opportunities.

STUDY

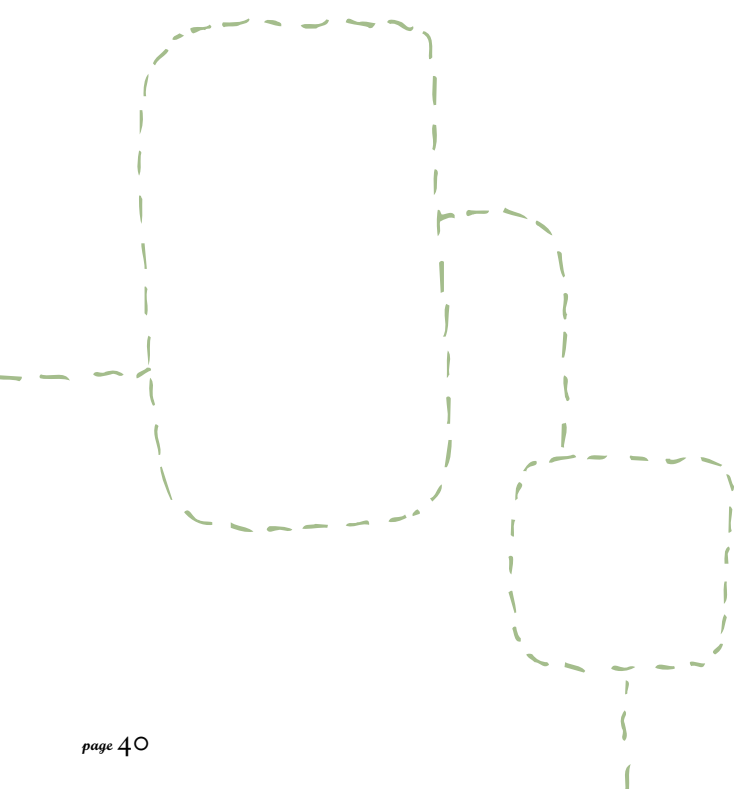
INVEST IN INCENTIVES FOR COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS TO ASSESS, MAP, PLAN, AND SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEIR YOUNG PEOPLE.

Collaboration is a necessary, but not free, activity. The mix of engaging learning opportunities in a community is best provided by an array of private, faith-based, service, city, county, and school-related organizations. Collaboration is critical in order to maximize the range of opportunities available, share facilities, and leverage multiple types and sources of funding effectively (e.g., fees, scholarships, sponsorships, grants, and direct-service funding). The Commission believes that providing resources that wisely and effectively encourage and enable community collaboration to better meet the needs of young people for engaging opportunities is one of the best investments that can be made. Specifically, the Commission encourages learning from successful collaborative models to implement a new action strategy. Informed by effective practices as well as challenges for collaborators, the goal is to invest in a system of collaboration that can both stimulate and support sustainable out-of-school time opportunities for 5-18 year olds.

POLICY

DEVELOP OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME POLICIES AND FUNDING STREAMS THAT PROVIDE COMMUNITIES AND PROGRAMS WITH A PREDICTABLE AND SUSTAINABLE LEVEL OF PUBLIC FUNDING THAT IS DESIGNED TO STIMULATE ACCESS FOR ALL AS WELL AS EFFECTIVELY TARGET FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES MOST IN NEED.

The Commission has come to conclude that inadequate funding, policy barriers, and instability are major threats to realizing the Commission's vision for out-of-school time. Commissioners also believe there is an important role for public policy and public funding that helps communities build the capacity to assure engaging opportunities for young people. An informed funding and policy debate on out-of-school time is needed in this state. The Commission broadly supports the strategic and efficient use of existing funds, the public allocation as well as private generation of new funds, and the creation of flexible, sustainable funding mechanisms that promote quality



and increase access to out-of-school time opportunities in Minnesota communities. Whatever the ultimate solutions are, something must be done to better focus and utilize public resources in ways that complement and leverage the large amount of private, business, volunteer, youth, and family resources already invested in communities. Without targeted government support of both existing and new resources, Minnesota will not be able to reach the vision of engaging learning opportunities for all.

EMPOWER

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT A YOUTH ENGAGEMENT PROCESS THAT WILL BRING YOUTH, CITIZENS, AND PROGRAM PROVIDERS TOGETHER TO HELP INDIVIDUAL COMMUNITIES ASSESS THE DEGREE TO WHICH THEIR COMMUNITIES ARE YOUTH-DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY FRIENDLY.

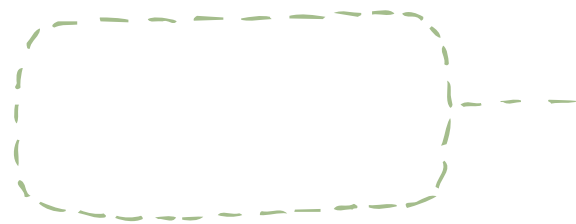
The Youth Caucus sponsored by the Commission came up with innovative recommendations for “Youth Engagement Councils” that would work locally, regionally, and at a state level to support the assessment and planning of ways to effectively engage youth in positive learning opportunities. These young people saw a need to have a mechanism closer to home to ensure locally responsive planning and effective resource use. The councils would have significant numbers of youth involved as full members and would be responsible for many of the functions and recommendations noted in this report. They would become hubs for stimulating local efforts and capitalizing on statewide resources.

The Commission believes such mechanisms that engage youth will be critical to the success of community and state efforts in assuring high-quality, accessible community opportunities in Minnesota. Some communities already have models for youth engagement in place. The Commission believes current efforts engaging youth in partnership with adults should be valued, while creating a more systematic approach to expand these efforts for youth in every region in the state. Therefore the Commission encourages a three-fold approach: building on current best practices in both organizations and communities, exploring promising new approaches that empower and engage youth in authentic ways, and ensuring a systematic statewide approach that can reach youth in all communities. All parts of the state should be covered by some form of youth engagement council that connects to a statewide system, as recommended by Youth Caucus participants.

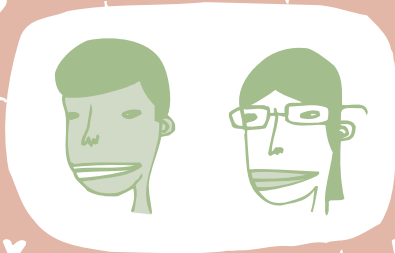
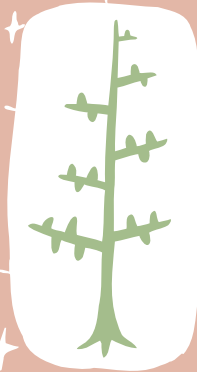
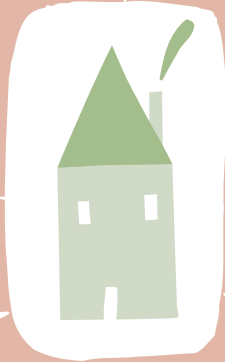
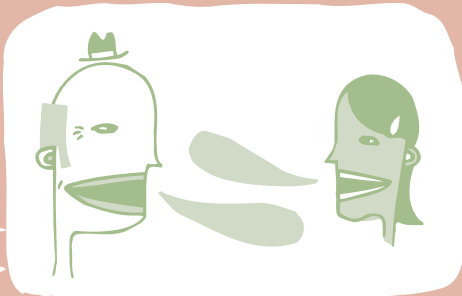
These councils must be diverse groups of youth who themselves understand participation and non-participation in opportunities. Youth can provide communities insight into why youth are and are not using opportunities and what opportunities young people *would* use, issue “report cards” on how communities are doing, and offer specific recommendations on what is needed. They could become the driving force behind efforts to map community opportunities, establish the technology-enhanced system for encouraging youth and family choice, and play important roles in implementing a variety of activities suggested throughout this report’s recommendations and action strategies.

Now is the time to take current youth-engagement efforts to scale and become systematic in statewide implementation. For example, implementing such a system regionally – as has been demonstrated with Regional Economic Development Boards, Extension regional centers, the Initiative Funds, and the Association of Minnesota Counties – seems an optimal place to start and to seek partnerships. These regional-level councils would focus on helping communities have the capacity to assure all communities are covered, stimulate more local councils, and more readily connect to state efforts.

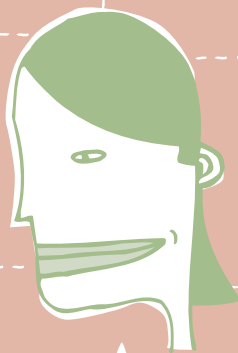
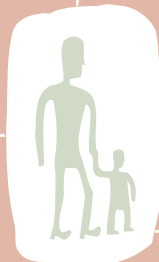
The Commission encourages exploring this work in conjunction with county commissioners and the Association of Minnesota Counties. See also Recommendation V that delineates action strategies needed to help ensure the proposed statewide fabric of support is indeed supportive of community-based opportunities.



HOME



COMMUNITY



family

5

Weave a Statewide Fabric of Support

ESTABLISH A STATEWIDE NETWORK AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL OPERATING SYSTEM OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT THAT INCLUDES PEOPLE, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, PHILANTHROPIC FOUNDATIONS, CORPORATIONS, AND OTHERS COMMITTED TO ADVANCING MINNESOTA'S OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME CAPACITY.

POLICY – Create a unified legislative strategy to stimulate, support, and help fund both public and private efforts to ensure high-quality community opportunities are available for all youth during non-school hours.

UNITE – Unite behind the efforts of the Minnesota Out-of-School Time Partnership to establish a funded, staffed, and focused hub to support and stimulate a statewide, independent operating system.

EMPOWER – Establish a biennial Youth Caucus on Out-of-School Time to advise the Minnesota Out-of-School Time Partnership.

INVEST – Invest in the development of a system of accountability and continuous improvement that supports the growth and effectiveness of community youth development experiences, strengthens professionals and volunteers, and measures program impact.

MOBILIZE – Develop linkages and expand connections among existing organizations, community collaborations, statewide groups, and formal associations to strengthen the fabric of support for children and youth.

5

Weave a Statewide Fabric of Support

ESTABLISH A STATEWIDE NETWORK AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL OPERATING SYSTEM OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT THAT INCLUDES PEOPLE, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, PHILANTHROPIC FOUNDATIONS, CORPORATIONS, AND OTHERS COMMITTED TO ADVANCING MINNESOTA'S OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME CAPACITY.

Minnesota needs a successful network and coordinated system of community support in order to maximize efficiency, reduce duplication, and organize for advocacy and public policy. The Commission especially wishes to acknowledge and build on the work of the Minnesota Out-of-School Time Partnership, which will review and help implement these recommendations.

This recommendation calls for an approach that can effectively stimulate opportunities in all communities, while encouraging and capitalizing on local flexibility. Consistent with the commitments set out earlier, this fabric of support should not be a government agency, but a weaving together of new and existing public and private threads that help communities as they encourage positive choices and provide challenging developmental opportunities.

Minnesota's approach to stimulating, supporting, and funding opportunities for youth has lacked clear vision, stability, systematic planning, and integrated thinking. We also lack well-defined and integrated structures for funding, field support, and accountability. We need a comprehensive approach to helping organizations use resources more efficiently, cooperate and coordinate in the provision of services, and expand their collective capacity to reach local youth. The following strategies can move Minnesota in this direction.

POLICY

CREATE A UNIFIED LEGISLATIVE STRATEGY TO STIMULATE, SUPPORT, AND HELP FUND BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EFFORTS TO ENSURE HIGH-QUALITY COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE FOR ALL YOUTH DURING NON-SCHOOL HOURS.

Given the importance of community opportunities for learning and development, a new legislative strategy for supporting policy and funding efforts is needed. This is neither to suggest that out-of-school time programming become a state-run entity nor that many current efforts are unimportant or unsuccessful. Rather, the Commission is concerned about the fractured and unsustainable ways in which opportunities are funded, and sees as a barrier the lack of a clear, comprehensive policy or policy process. The very absence of legislative forums for addressing these issues is symptomatic of the problem. The Commission believes only a combined personal, private, and public effort can succeed in realizing the vision.

Recent history has shown, however, that simply combining everything related to children, youth, and families into one agency is not sustainable. Likewise, folding everything into formal, achievement-focused K-12 education may narrow the ways we can and should engage young people in nonformal opportunities. Policies that stimulate and support community opportunities should cover extracurricular activities as well as programs run in schools during non-school hours. They should also include a wide variety of other publicly and privately funded opportunities made available by faith-based, community-based, private, and other types of organizations. The Commission recommends that both houses of the legislature consider strategies and structures for enhancing investments essential to healthy learning and development, but not solely part of the formal K-12 school day.

New policy strategies should recognize the commonalities between opportunities for nonformal learning and healthy development, as well as those within the educational system. Such strategies could also provide better ways to examine and encourage effective bundling of resources already allocated. The goal is to promote clearer debate and more effective policy formation around the provision of out-of-school time opportunities that support learning, engage youth in their own development, and enhance their contributions to the community. Schools and school districts, especially community education, are critical

community partners when it comes to these issues, but schools cannot do it alone. Changing the policy context is one key step.

UNITE

UNITE BEHIND THE EFFORTS OF THE MINNESOTA OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PARTNERSHIP TO ESTABLISH A FUNDED, STAFFED, AND FOCUSED HUB TO SUPPORT AND STIMULATE A STATEWIDE, INDEPENDENT OPERATING SYSTEM.

The Commission's investigations support the need for a strong, nongovernmental, funded, and staffed office that can help unite and mobilize the range of advocacy, education, awareness, and collaboration efforts. Since the Partnership has secured three years' funding and includes many of the partners initially needed, the Commission urges those who care about community-based youth development to continue to support the Partnership's evolution, inclusiveness, and planning. This evolution should include learning from other statewide entities as well as from best practices in other fields. Essential elements of success include forums for system-level discussions, networks of groups focused specifically on improving non-school learning opportunities, associations of practitioners, and other ways to bring together efforts to move Minnesota toward realization of the vision. If community-based developmental opportunities are ever to play the significant role Commissioners believe they can, a strong partnership with a visible and effective governing mechanism must not be delayed.

EMPOWER

ESTABLISH A BIENNIAL YOUTH CAUCUS ON OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME TO ADVISE THE MINNESOTA OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PARTNERSHIP.

No effort is complete or ultimately effective in this area without significant, authentic roles for young people. The Commission believes it is essential to create a biennial gathering of youth that runs on a time line designed to inform the legislature and the Partnership. Whether a formal caucus or something similar, it could both inform the regional youth engagement councils and be the state-level version. Reliable and predictable ways for the Caucus to inform other state actions as well as support local and regional capacity should be established.

INVEST

INVEST IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SYSTEM OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT THAT SUPPORTS THE GROWTH AND EFFECTIVENESS OF COMMUNITY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES, STRENGTHENS PROFESSIONALS AND VOLUNTEERS, AND MEASURES PROGRAM IMPACT.

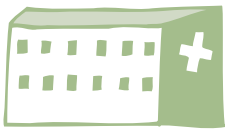
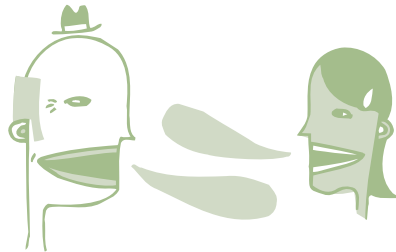
One advantage of a not-yet-highly-established field is the opportunity to design an accountability system that can promote continuous improvement. As stakeholders come together to implement these recommendations, the Commission calls upon all to invest in sensible standards and approaches compatible with the multiple funders, stakeholders, and support levels of the field. In particular, accountability systems ought to include levels of youth participation, program quality, and effectiveness of state and regional efforts to enhance out-of-school capacity.

MOBILIZE

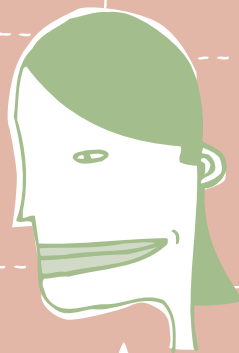
DEVELOP LINKAGES AND EXPAND CONNECTIONS AMONG EXISTING ORGANIZATIONS, COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS, STATEWIDE GROUPS, AND FORMAL ASSOCIATIONS TO STRENGTHEN THE FABRIC OF SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

Minnesota is fortunate to have many organizations and associations that care deeply about improving the lives of children and youth. However, as has been described, there is little coordination to ensure positive choices during the non-school hours or to enable communities to offer the range of constructive opportunities needed. Just as it is essential to unite around offering out-of-school time opportunities, it is also critical to connect with others who support the education, development, and health of our children and youth – and the families with whom they live. The Commission believes that progress will be made only when there is strong, direct attention on out-of-school time and better cooperation among those who focus on other contexts and ages. Neither one nor the other alone is likely to be sufficient in the long term.

HOME



COMMUNITY



family

6

Build Public Will

STRENGTHEN PUBLIC AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING, AND DEMAND FOR HIGH-QUALITY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN COMMUNITIES.

UNITE – Conduct a four-year social marketing campaign to increase public understanding and enhance effective advocacy for high-quality, accessible, and powerful community opportunities.

EMPOWER – Involve young people in a marketing campaign to promote youth development programs and experiences and to engage young people’s energy and contributions in communities.

MOBILIZE – Create ways to sustain and expand efforts that enhance awareness, increase action, and strengthen advocacy efforts on behalf of nonformal learning opportunities for children and youth.

6 *Build Public Will*

STRENGTHEN PUBLIC AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING, AND DEMAND FOR HIGH-QUALITY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN COMMUNITIES.

The public at large, and the voting citizens in Minnesota in particular, must understand the added value of engaging community-based learning and development opportunities for young people. They need to understand the issues in terms relevant to their lives and communities – developmental and economic. Employers need to understand and emphasize these experiences in hiring and supporting their employees. Parents need to see the larger value of such opportunities and benefits beyond safety and child care for these age groups. Parents need to know the essential roles they play in helping young people find, participate in, reflect on, and manage these opportunities. School leadership, board members, and staff need to value the benefits for academic achievement but also beyond academics. Volunteers need to know that when they make such opportunities possible they are making a difference. Youth need to know that encouraging other youth to participate and supporting positive norms of engagement helps everyone win. Such public and key stakeholder understanding is essential for success.

The action strategies in this section are designed to help people understand, value, and act in ways that will support moving the vision forward and the number and quality of opportunities upward. Together, we can increase public awareness about the importance of and possibilities created by out-of-school opportunities. Advocating for and disseminating the vision and strategies outlined in this report are excellent starting points.

UNITE

CONDUCT A FOUR-YEAR SOCIAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN TO INCREASE PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING AND ENHANCE EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY FOR HIGH-QUALITY, ACCESSIBLE, AND POWERFUL COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES.

It is time to bring together the best minds in communication and marketing to launch a statewide, multi-pronged campaign with clear goals and periodic assessments. A study conducted by Frameworks Institute for the Minnesota Out-of-School Time Partnership suggests just how important it is to help people understand child and youth development, the benefit of community engagement, and individuals' roles in creating healthy, family-friendly communities that nurture their residents.¹⁴ An aggressive media and grassroots effort to clearly and persistently communicate key messages is essential. The growing statewide fabric of support should help craft and deliver those messages. This campaign is targeted to begin in fall of 2005.

EMPOWER

INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE IN A MARKETING CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND EXPERIENCES AND TO ENGAGE YOUNG PEOPLE'S ENERGY AND CONTRIBUTIONS IN COMMUNITIES.

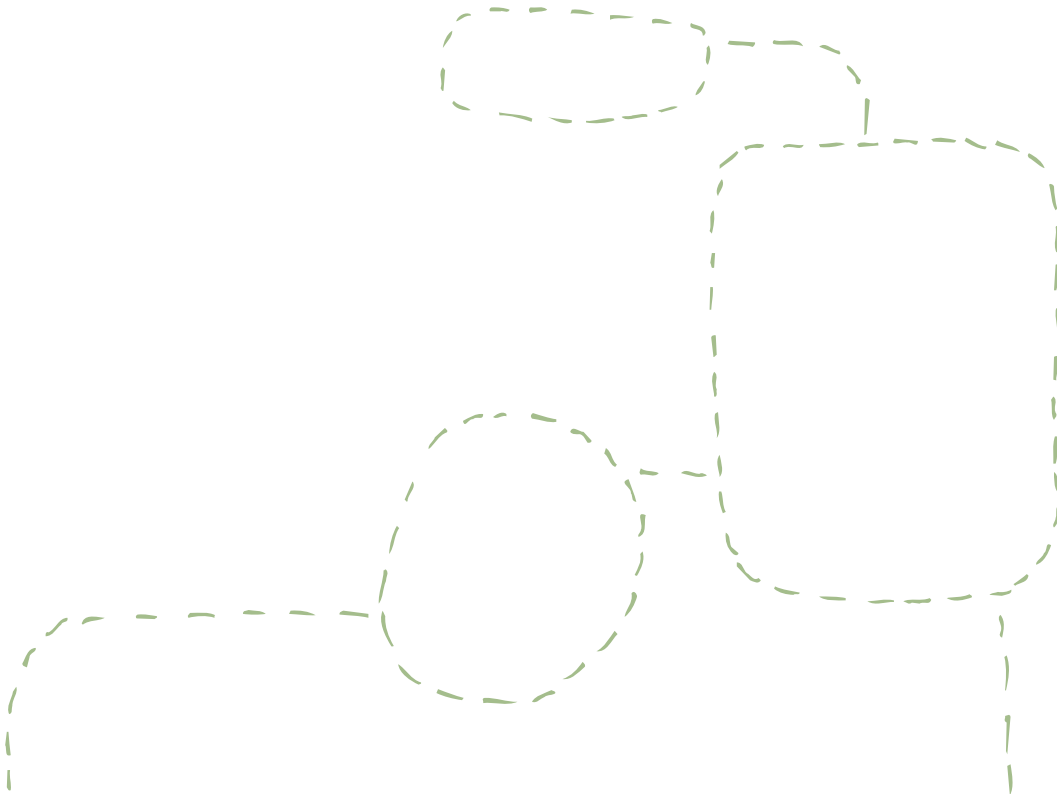
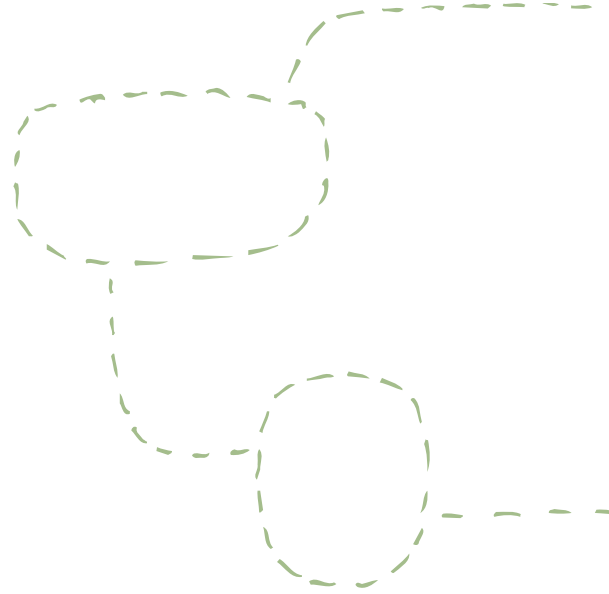
The success of youth created and driven anti-smoking and other public awareness campaigns is a best practice that can make a difference here, helping youth see and convince other youth that choosing positive opportunities, contributing to community, and having fun in the process is a good thing, not boring, uncool, or a conspiracy by parents or the state. The Target Market anti-tobacco campaign is one example. This part of an overall campaign would be designed to speak to youth and build peer and community norms for engagement. This is an area worthy of significant investment – investment that will help build public awareness as well as demand for high-quality opportunities.

¹⁴ For more information, see <http://www.mnywi.org/mnpost.html>.

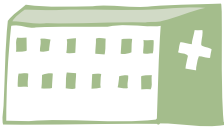
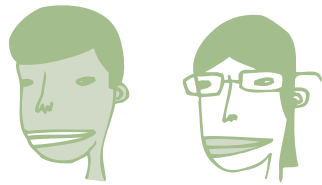
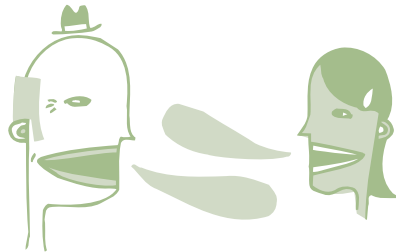
MOBILIZE

CREATE WAYS TO SUSTAIN AND EXPAND EFFORTS THAT ENHANCE AWARENESS, INCREASE ACTION, AND STRENGTHEN ADVOCACY EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF NONFORMAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

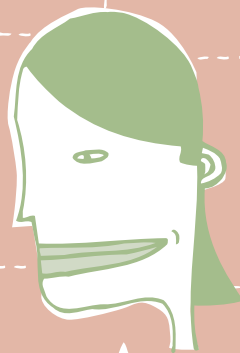
As the Minnesota Out-of-School Time Partnership works to weave a statewide fabric of support and an operating system as noted above, building in the ability to communicate with and mobilize large numbers of people to carry critical messages is important. From saturating organizational newsletters to capitalizing on local coverage with stories that illustrate in human terms the power of youth engaged in high-quality opportunities in their communities, these efforts are first and critical places for organizations to come together. We need to help move from a field that communicates primarily about the benefits of specific programs to a better understanding about the importance of these opportunities for the optimal development of young people. This shift in focus aligns youth-serving organizations around shared goals for children and youth, and allows them to speak with a unified voice.



HOME



COMMUNITY



family

7

Establish an Investment Fund and Financial Plan

ESTABLISH A BALANCED PERSONAL – PRIVATE – PUBLIC INVESTMENT FUND AND OVERALL FINANCIAL PLAN TO IMPLEMENT THE VISION FOR ENGAGING MINNESOTA'S YOUNG PEOPLE.

Action Strategies for Establishing an Investment Fund

INVEST – Design and establish a \$12-million annual investment fund and the mechanisms needed to secure, allocate, and account for use of these funds.

Action Strategies for Creating a Sound, Long-term Financial Plan

UNITE – Until a better sense of the overall need and cost is determined, unite to maintain current levels of public funding.

STUDY – Design and execute a study of the supply and demand of out-of-school opportunities and the factors that affect their costs as well as benefits.

FUND – Support the bundling and focusing of existing state and federal funding for youth development, child care, school-age care, prevention programs and extended-day/21st Century Learning Centers to ensure its effective and efficient use.

FUND – Encourage the emergence of a Youth Development Funders' Group within the Minnesota Council of Philanthropy to help bring focus and consistency to private foundation support for out-of-school opportunities and the complementary infrastructures called for in this report as well as the Council's report.

7

Establish an Investment Fund and Financial Plan

ESTABLISH A BALANCED PERSONAL – PRIVATE – PUBLIC INVESTMENT FUND AND OVERALL FINANCIAL PLAN TO IMPLEMENT THE VISION FOR ENGAGING MINNESOTA'S YOUNG PEOPLE.

Throughout this report there are calls for new investments. The need for sustainable funding mechanisms is central to any discussion of ensuring high-quality, accessible, and high-impact out-of-school time opportunities. It is often the first request from program people and the largest barrier named. Yet we, the Commission members, have chosen to deal with it last and in a unique way. Why?

During the course of its work, the Commission has recognized that the field of youth development and, specifically, youth development programs in all types of community settings, must take a strategic, longer-term view of its vision for young people. The Commission recommendations (particularly in the current environment) most need a steady, strategic approach rather than a financial jump start. New thinking is as badly needed as new funding.

The unallocation of monies to After-School Enrichment Grants helped identify the need for better advocacy and a longer-term strategic approach as much as it dramatized the negative consequences for sustainability in rural and urban areas when such funds disappear. Are we likely investing enough to make sure young people have the opportunities they need to grow into reliable, well-rounded, and engaged adult members of the community? We are not – neither publicly nor privately. The money and effort invested wisely in the positive development of young people comes back to our communities many times over as our children become family members, adult citizens, and workers. In an ironic way, because Minnesota has done relatively well by its youth and they have good outcomes in many areas, we are both now poised for greatness and on the brink of losing momentum as we cope with financial shortfalls and short-sighted thinking about the use of public resources. As noted in the book, *Good to Great*, too often good is the enemy of great because it does not allow enough new thinking to come into problem solving.¹⁵ In

a similar way, funding concerns can be the enemy when reaching for a new vision where all youth have engaging learning opportunities they and their families choose and their communities and state help plan, implement, and resource.

For these reasons, the Commission chose deliberately to tackle the issues of investments and funding for programs last, though it is certainly not the least of the critical issues that must be addressed. The action strategies below are designed to accomplish two important goals related to increasing and stabilizing funding for out-of-school time opportunities in Minnesota.

- ◆ Create a significant new investment fund to help support the myriad of possible investments in new systems, partnerships, and collaborations that are badly needed and called for throughout this report as well as those yet to be discovered (in essence, the capital needed to grow the field).
- ◆ Create a sound, long-term financial plan for support of sustainable, high-quality, readily accessed, high-impact opportunities for youth – funding to support the creation and delivery of these opportunities directly to and with young people (in essence, the operating budget for the next five years).

Unlike in the action strategies in early sections of the report, more detail is provided here to ensure these strategies can move forward more rapidly. Clearly none call for action during the current legislative session.

¹⁵ Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap...and others don't*. NY: Harper Business.

Action Strategies for Establishing an Investment Fund

INVEST

DESIGN AND ESTABLISH A \$12-MILLION ANNUAL INVESTMENT FUND AND THE MECHANISMS NEEDED TO SECURE, ALLOCATE, AND ACCOUNT FOR USE OF THESE FUNDS.

It is difficult to estimate the resources already being spent on community-based youth development opportunities, let alone assess investments as varied as the number of volunteer hours, in-kind support, cash contributions, grants, public funding, facility costs, and the myriad related resources. The Commission therefore urges starting with a modest investment fund (approximately \$1 per month per 5-18 year old in the state), and mechanisms with the power to make decisions about what is most needed and likely to work, how funds are strategically allocated, and how their use and impact are reported. The creation of this capital fund is the mechanism proposed for supporting the types of investments called for throughout this report (see “INVEST” action strategies under each recommendation) – investments in efforts to support and stimulate many new approaches other than the direct delivery of programs (which is addressed separately below). When taken together, these investments will help ensure a better coordinated, more accountable, and more cooperative system for engaging all youth in positive opportunities – a system that is not government owned and operated, but rather owned by youth, communities, and our public institutions in an equal and productive partnership.

Everyone who benefits from quality community opportunities – families, communities, government – should contribute a share of the investment costs needed to grow the field and stimulate and support efforts to make it more effective and efficient. These system investments make more and better programs accessible but do not actually pay for the operations of the program. In setting up this Youth-Community-Government Investment Fund, the following steps help to shape its form.

Set a **\$12 per young person** per year challenge goal for creating the Youth Opportunities Investment Fund.

Establish equal expectations for youth, communities, and state or local government to contribute to this invest-

ment fund (\$4/young person/year from each source).

The youth share of the funds (\$4 million/year or \$4/young person/year) should be designed to include not only voluntary contributions raised by youth or donated to a special fund but also the time youth put into a variety of community engagement mechanisms called for in this report (not the time they spend in other out-of-school opportunities). These funds help ensure that youth are at the table and have a meaningful say in how the fund is used – because they helped create it.

The community share (\$4 million/year or \$4/young person/year) should come from a variety of private, philanthropic, and corporate sources, and should be limited to actual dollars to ensure there is capital to invest and to use as matching funds to leverage public dollars and youths’ efforts. These funds should go beyond current contributions to specific programs through grants and sponsorships – which should continue and expand as noted below.

The government share (\$4 million/year or \$4/young person/year) could come from any new sources. It should not replace current funds but represent a genuine new investment in the area of out-of-school opportunities. The mechanism used to generate these funds and ensure their continued availability is left to policy makers to determine but might include tax check-offs, creation of an endowment, general funds, or any number of other options.

Establish an appropriate, **formal, nongovernmental legal structure** to oversee the collection of, allocation of, and accountability for these funds.

Target the first investments of these funds for July 1, 2006.

Action Strategies for Creating a Sound, Long-term Financial Plan

UNITE

UNTIL A BETTER SENSE OF THE OVERALL NEED AND COST IS DETERMINED, UNITE TO MAINTAIN CURRENT LEVELS OF PUBLIC FUNDING.

While the Commission has not had the resources to do appropriate economic analyses of the supply, demand,

and cost of out-of-school programs across the full range of age-appropriate types of opportunities, it is quite clear that there is neither sufficient funding nor an appropriate structure to assure the sustainability of critical opportunities – especially in rural and urban communities. Therefore, maintaining the funding streams that exist at federal, state, and local levels is a high priority around which we encourage people to unite.

STUDY

DESIGN AND EXECUTE A STUDY OF THE SUPPLY AND DEMAND OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL OPPORTUNITIES AND THE FACTORS THAT AFFECT THEIR COSTS AS WELL AS BENEFITS.

We simply know too little about these critical areas. Filling these gaps in knowledge, as a recent Rand Corporation report noted, will allow for improved understanding and more effective approaches to using resources wisely.¹⁶ This study should be designed in ways seen as credible by the stakeholders and policy makers who must approve use of public funds.

FUND

SUPPORT THE BUNDLING AND FOCUSING OF EXISTING STATE AND FEDERAL FUNDING FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT, CHILD CARE, SCHOOL-AGE CARE, PREVENTION PROGRAMS AND EXTENDED-DAY/21ST CENTURY LEARNING CENTERS TO ENSURE ITS EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT USE.

As two of the Commission's briefing papers note, only a small percentage of funds go directly to out-of-school time opportunities though there are many funding streams that could and should be tapped.¹⁷ Gaining a deeper understanding of these sources and the need to advocate for their effective use should be one of many initial priorities for the Minnesota Out-of-School Time Partnership as it staffs up.

¹⁶ Bodilly, S., & Beckett, M. (2005). *Making out-of-school time matter: Evidence for an action agenda*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Education.

¹⁷ See Hogg, N., Lochner, A. and Hahn, A. (2004). *In search of youth policy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Minnesota Commission on Out-of-School Time; and Lochner, A. (2004). *Funding strategies for out-of-school time*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Minnesota Commission on Out-of-School Time.

FUND

ENCOURAGE THE EMERGENCE OF A YOUTH DEVELOPMENT FUNDERS' GROUP WITHIN THE MINNESOTA COUNCIL OF PHILANTHROPY TO HELP BRING FOCUS AND CONSISTENCY TO PRIVATE FOUNDATION SUPPORT FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL OPPORTUNITIES AND THE COMPLEMENTARY INFRASTRUCTURES CALLED FOR IN THIS REPORT AS WELL AS THE COUNCIL'S REPORT.

Through the leadership of the McKnight Foundation, an informal Youth Development Policy Group has been meeting to discuss shared interests and possible directions. The Commission wishes to both acknowledge this effort and encourage its continued growth and formalization. As it grows it can help shape both the Investment Fund and the ongoing program funding needed to realize the vision of all Minnesota youth engaged in learning opportunities.





Conclusion

The next five years hold great promise and enormous challenges for nonformal learning and development opportunities in Minnesota. What Minnesota's young people do when they are not in school has serious implications both for their development and for communities across our state. It has become clear that creating wise new policies for the youth development field does not rely on government-imposed or operated solutions. Rather, it depends on breathing new life into community-based learning in ways that support and complement school-based education without excessive control by schools and funding systems.

We believe Minnesotans are up to the challenges. We *can* become much more systematic and intentional about the choices youth and families have and make. We *can* be more creative in our approaches to stimulating and supporting community opportunities for all. And even though we don't have a precise price tag or a fully defined blueprint for action, Minnesotans *can* and *must* begin to understand and embrace the importance of community-based learning experiences for our children and youth.

We hope the directions set out by the Commission, and the vision presented in this report, help advance the debate and move us further in our collective journey. To ensure that the journey continues, we call upon the University of Minnesota, as part of its Presidential Initiative on Children, Youth, and Families, and the emerging Minnesota Out-of-School Partnership to conduct reviews of progress in 2008 and 2010.

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List of Briefs

MINNESOTA COMMISSION ON OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME RESEARCH BRIEFING PAPERS

Making the Case

WHAT IS OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME?

Defines what out-of-school time is and articulates why and how out-of-school time activities are important to the development of young people.

Explores societal factors influencing the needs of young people for developmental opportunities during non-school hours and the impact of these experiences.

Reports on public opinion across key constituencies regarding the need for out-of-school time opportunities.

WHAT ARE YOUNG PEOPLE DOING WITH THEIR TIME?

Reviews research regarding the amount of time young people are involved in “constructive” versus “unconstructive” activities during their free time.

Discusses findings related to quality as a major factor in the overall benefit of structured and unstructured opportunities.

Confirms that all youth benefit from high-quality out-of-school time experiences, but especially those in under-resourced, high-risk communities.

Understanding the Current Situation

DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOT

Provides an overview of demographic characteristics for Minnesota’s children and youth, including their distribution across age groups, ethnicity, geographic location, family composition, and economic condition.

Illustrates circumstances that affect young Minnesotans’ needs for out-of-school time opportunities.

IN SEARCH OF YOUTH POLICY

Examines the share of public money – either from state revenues or federal revenues allocated to the state – devoted to supportive programming for youth during 2003.

Breaks down state funding priorities for youth by program, age, and type of opportunity.

Analyzes and points to challenges arising from Minnesota’s current public policy priorities for youth, including the lack of coherent vision across policies, deficit- rather than asset-based policies, and lack of coordination across policies.

SUPPORT FOR ADULTS IN OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS

Reports on the findings from a recent study of field support efforts in Minnesota that suggests that the systems and structures in place are largely fragmented and inconsistent in their work to strengthen the capacity of adults who work in the out-of-school time field.

Provides an overview of the challenges posed by a field where many people work at multiple sites, playing different roles with different responsibilities.

Offers recommendations and strategies for improving systems of support for out-of-school time providers.

SUSTAINABILITY OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS

Examines the impact on programs, young people, families, and communities, of the elimination of \$11 million for After School Enrichment Grants across Minnesota.

Describes factors that promoted the sustainability of programs that were able to continue offering services despite the deep budget cuts.

Exploring Options

OVERVIEW OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME FUNDING STREAMS

Summarizes a review of the most commonly used out-of-school time funding streams that revealed a combination of parent fees; federal, state, and local public dollars; private funds; and in-kind contributions.

Provides an overview of out-of-school time funding streams and brief descriptions of how specific resources are targeted to addressing the needs of young people.

FUNDING STRATEGIES FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME

Provides an overview of funding strategies that have been used by selected states, counties, and municipalities in improving systems that provide out-of-school time supports and opportunities for youth.

Includes specific real-life examples of out-of-school time funding strategies from communities across the country.

THE EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE WITH YOUTH PROGRAMS: LESSONS FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME

Describes lessons and perspectives encountered on a site visit to European universities offering degrees in youth and community work, as well as participation in a seminar held at the Council of Europe that focused on ways to strengthen the youth field through training, quality assurance, and systems of field support.

Offers comparisons between Europe and the United States in areas of language, age distinctions, intentional outcomes, and other topics related to out-of-school time.

Reflects on ideas for improving Minnesota's out-of-school time systems based on what was learned and observed in Europe.

LISTENING TO YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERSPECTIVES ON OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME OPPORTUNITIES

Reports on the findings from focus groups conducted with 101 middle and high-school students in nine Minnesota communities.

Provides an overview of what was learned from these youth about the out-of-school time opportunities and experiences in their communities.

Profiles briefly each community involved in the study.

Suggests that there is a continuum of availability and accessibility of out-of-school time opportunities in Minnesota's communities ranging from opportunity-depleted to opportunity-rich.

Defining What Minnesota Wants

THE MINNESOTA YOUTH CAUCUS: AN OVERVIEW

Describes the Caucus purpose, process, and agenda.

Includes participant list.

THE MINNESOTA YOUTH CAUCUS: REPORT ON PROCEEDINGS

Summarizes what was said and learned.

Offers 10 recommendations related to strengthening out-of-school time opportunities in Minnesota.

THE MINNESOTA YOUTH CAUCUS: IMPLEMENTATION IDEAS AND ACTION STEPS

Describes specific ways youth, families, schools, communities, and states can take action on the Caucus recommendations.

THE MINNESOTA YOUTH CAUCUS: YOUTH ON YOUTH: YOUTH-CONDUCTED FIELD INTERVIEWS WITH NON-PARTICIPATORS IN OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME OPPORTUNITIES

Highlights key issues raised in interviews conducted by youth leaders with other young people who typically do not participate in out-of-school time activities.

Crafting Recommendations

Ten community case studies, prepared by professionals in Community Youth Development, provide a view of the infrastructures in communities that support youth opportunities.

CASE STUDY: DULUTH

Builds on the strength of a critical mass of agencies with similar work.

CASE STUDY: FROGTOWN

Has invested thought and resources in a structure that makes a difference.

CASE STUDY: HOFFMAN

Highlights flexibility and new ways of thinking.

CASE STUDY: LEWISTON

Addresses communication needs at several levels.

CASE STUDY: LYLE

Focuses on the strength of public will.

CASE STUDY: GREATER MANKATO AREA

Describes a vision of impacting accessibility.

CASE STUDY: MARSHALL

Articulates the importance of leadership.

CASE STUDY: MURRAY COUNTY

Provides the foundation for out-of-school time efforts through an awareness of the community as a whole.

CASE STUDY: PACT 4 COLLABORATIVE: KANDIYOHI, MEEKER, RENVILLE, AND YELLOW MEDICINE COUNTIES

Shows how to coordinate beyond community to utilize the resources of the region.

CASE STUDY: ROCHESTER

Reflects the importance of developing a plan.

List of Commissioners¹⁸

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WCCO-TV

Carol Truesdell
Youth Trust (Retired)

Commissioners:

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University of Minnesota Student

Joanne Benson
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David Walsh
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Christopher Wilson
University of Minnesota Student

Credits

This report and the work of the Commission would not have been possible without the commitment, talent, and energy of many people. As Commissioners we would like to thank President Bruininks for the opportunity to learn and reflect on the critical issues of engaging Minnesota's youth during the non-school hours. President Bruininks' leadership and commitment to children, youth, and families is remarkable and of enormous value to the state of Minnesota. We also wish to thank the Commission staff from the University of Minnesota Extension Service who put in untold hours to help frame our work and craft the final report with us. Special thanks to Dale Blyth, Commission Chief of Staff; Ann Lochner, Commission Director; Joyce Walker, Professor; David Moen, Youth Caucus Coordinator; Sherry Boyce and Janet Beyer, Regional Extension Educators; and Kitty Schneider, Administrative Assistant. Special thanks also to the variety of contractors, writers, and participants who helped inform our work – including Jennifer Griffin-Wiesner for her editorial work, Alyssa Thomas for her design work, and Peter Lochner for his illustrations. Finally, we would like to thank the Minnesota Out-of-School Time Partnership and our funders, the McKnight Foundation and the Minnesota Department of Education. Their resources, support, and encouragement have made it possible to assemble the vision and strategies captured in this report though the ideas are our own. It is gratifying to know that the work we have begun will continue in multiple ways under the auspices of the Minnesota Out-of-School Time Partnership and its many partners – including the University of Minnesota.

¹⁸ The content of this report represents the views of the Commission as a whole. Particular sections may not reflect the perspectives of individual Commissioners or their organizations.

About the Commission

The Minnesota Commission on Out-of-School Time convened in January 2004, charged by University of Minnesota President Robert Bruininks with crafting the vision and strategies needed to ensure Minnesota's young people – ages 5 to 18 – have engaging opportunities to learn and develop essential skills during their non-school hours. President Bruininks invited a variety of experts with a shared concern about the positive development of young people during childhood and adolescence to participate. He underscored the importance of the charge by stressing that “How and where young people are spending their out-of-school time is a major concern for working families, business, communities, schools, and neighborhoods throughout Minnesota.”

The Commission established a thematic course of study and deliberation that extended across the year, culminating in 2005 with a set of recommendations for out-of-school time in Minnesota. Categories of Commission inquiry included:

- ✦ Making the Case – Articulating why and how out-of-school time activities are important to the development of young people.
- ✦ Understanding the Current Situation – Creating a portrait of current out-of-school time opportunities and the roles played by formal and nonformal programs.
- ✦ Exploring Options – Identifying best practices nationally and internationally.
- ✦ Defining what Minnesota wants – Describing what is desirable and possible.
- ✦ Crafting Recommendations – Outlining what research and statewide expertise suggest as viable strategies for moving forward.

As the culmination of its work, the Commission created this final report with recommendations to guide the leaders and citizens of Minnesota in addressing the developmental needs of children during childhood and adolescence.

The Commission is part of the University of Minnesota President's Initiative on Children, Youth, and Families, and is supported by funding from the University and the statewide Minnesota Out-of-School Time Partnership. The Partnership is a network of public and private organizations dedicated to the belief that all Minnesota communities must ensure options for children and youth to learn, develop, and contribute during non-school hours. Detailed information about the Commission, including briefing papers and research summaries is available online at www.mncost.org. Information about the Partnership is available at www.youthworkinstitute.org/mnpost.html.

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