

Practices To Keep In After-School and Youth Programs



From Membership to Leadership: The Pathways to Leadership Program





Youth Development Institute

A Program of the Tides Center

1440 Broadway, Suite 1601

New York, NY 10018

(646) 943-8820

www.ydinstitute.org

Established in 1991 in New York City, the Youth Development Institute (YDI) is one of a growing number of intermediary organizations throughout the United States that seek to create a cohesive community infrastructure to support the positive development of youth. YDI approaches its work with an understanding of and a respect for the complexities of young people's lives and the critical role of youth-serving organizations in supporting young people's growth and development.

YDI's mission is to increase the capacity of communities to support the development of young people. YDI provides technical assistance, conducts research, and assists policy-makers in developing more effective approaches to support and offer opportunities to young people. At the core of YDI's work is a research-based approach to youth development. This work is asset-based in focusing on the strengths of young people, organizations and their staff. It seeks to bring together all of the resources in the lives of young people—school, community, and family—to build coherent and positive environments. The youth development framework identifies five principles that have been found to be present when youth, especially those with significant obstacles in their lives, achieve successful adulthood:

- Close relationships with adults
- High expectations
- Engaging activities
- Opportunities for contribution
- Continuity of adult supports over time

The Youth Development Institute (YDI) also strengthens non-profit organizations and public agencies and builds programs that address gaps in services, in New York City and nationally. It provides training and on-site technical assistance, conducts research, develops practice and policy innovations, and supports advocacy. This work enables organizations and agencies to apply the most promising lessons from research and practice so that they operate efficiently and the young people they serve grow and develop through powerful, sustained, and joyful experiences. YDI helps organizations to design their programs based on sound knowledge about what works and provides their leaders and staff with the information and skills to implement these strategies effectively. YDI addresses gaps in youth services by developing new programs and policies in areas and for populations that are addressed inadequately.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

From Membership to Leadership: The Pathways to Leadership Program, part of YDI's *Practices to Keep In After-School and Youth Programs* series was researched and written by Michael Chavez Reilly, a consultant to the Youth Development Institute.

We are grateful to The Atlantic Philanthropies and the Annie E. Casey Foundation for supporting YDI's Beacons National Strategy. *Practices to Keep* is a product of this effort.

The author wishes to thank the following people who contributed their time and wisdom to this report:

Good Shepherd Services Beacon P.S. 15:

Jennifer Zanger, Assistant Executive Director for Brooklyn Community Programs

Jose Cordero, Beacon Program Director

Melvin Bowers, Assistant Program Director

Roland Knight, Activity Specialist and Group Leader-Pathfinders

Zanderia Hill, Group Leader

All other Beacon staff and participants who allowed us to observe their work

Youth Development Institute:

Peter Kleinbard, Executive Director

Sarah Zeller-Berkman, Beacons National Strategy Director

TJ Volonis, Office Manager & Executive Assistant

Ellen Wahl for her work on the introduction

Special thanks to **Walis Johnson**, Former Director of Beacons National Strategy

And the rest of the staff of the Youth Development Institute

Copyright & Use

Practices to Keep In After-School and Youth Programs is a publication series of the Youth Development Institute. YDI encourages others to copy and use these materials. Please use proper attribution when doing so. Suggested citation: *Practices to Keep and Youth Programs: From Membership to Leadership: The Pathways to Leadership Program*. Youth Development Institute, 2009. Publications in this series as well as other YDI publications are available on the YDI website at: www.ydinstitute.org.

Copyright © April 2009, Youth Development Institute, a program of the Tides Center

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
<i>Practices to Keep in After-School and Youth Programs</i>	
From Membership to Leadership:	7
<i>The Pathways to Leadership Program</i>	
The Beacons Movement and Youth Programming	17

1

Introduction

1. INTRODUCTION

Practices to Keep In After-School and Youth Programs is a series of documentation reports that highlight successful approaches in Beacons, which are community centers in school buildings that combine youth and community development to support young people, families, and neighborhoods. Developed for Beacons, these approaches are also widely used in the expanding world of After-School and Youth Programs.

The reports demonstrate how local ingenuity applied to key issues over time can leverage individual, neighborhood, and policy change. They contain ideas for practitioners to adapt to their own programs and for policymakers who seek practical responses to critical concerns—literacy and academic support for youth, preparation for work and participation in the labor force, strengthening families and preventing foster care placement, and creating opportunities to play important roles that strengthen the fabric of community social organization.

The Beacons Movement and After-School Programming

Beacons were first established in New York City in 1991 as part of the Safe Cities Safe Streets program. Located in schools and operated by community-based organizations with core funding provided by New York City, the Beacons represent an innovative collaboration between the public and non-profit sectors to turn the school building into a true public resource. Today, more than 100 Beacons in five cities offer education, recreation, adult education, arts, and family programming after school, before school, on weekends, and during vacations. In New York City, Beacons serve more than 150,000 children, youth, and adults annually. Nationally they reach more than 250,000 individuals in San Francisco, Minneapolis, Denver, and West Palm Beach, Florida.

The Beacons forge partnerships across public, non-profit, and private institutions to fortify neighborhoods. They create pathways for participation between age groups and a continuum of programming that promotes healthy development and strong families. They contribute to local economic development by providing jobs to young people and adults. They help to make neighborhoods safe and connect residents to each other and to local resources. At a time when social services are increasingly located outside of the communities that need them, the Beacons serve as a hub for an array of social and educational supports.

Funding for the Beacon programs described in *Practices to Keep* comes from a wide variety of sources. The range demonstrates a commitment by both the public and private sectors to the comprehensive work of Beacons, with support located in education, labor, child welfare, and human services. Sources include:

- Local tax levy
- Local, state, and federal foster care
- Private foundations
- Public-school dollars
- State after-school funding sources
- Summer Youth Employment Program (OTDA, US DOL)
- Supplemental Education Services, part of No Child Left Behind (US DOE)
- 21st Century Community Learning Centers (US DOE)

- Youth Development and Delinquency Prevention (NYSOYD)
- Workforce Investment Act: In-School Youth; Out-of-School Youth; Literacy (USDOL)

The need for the Beacons and other programs that build on similar principles is more urgent today than ever. The economic crisis that began in 2008 has affected every sector of society, but will inevitably hit hardest in poor communities where the Beacons are located. Too often, services are removed from the very neighborhoods where they are needed most. The Beacons place services in the center of poor communities. The gains that the Beacons help create must be protected, as the need for comprehensive and coordinated services, high quality education and work preparation, and community safety increases. The Beacons have earned the trust and respect of local residents and provide a tested infrastructure for attaching additional or consolidated programs.

Practices to Keep In After-School and Youth Programs illustrates how Beacons provide young people with pathways to increasingly responsible roles, involve youth and adults in improving their communities, and create environments of support to keep families together.

2

From Membership to Leadership:
The Pathways to Leadership Program

2. FROM MEMBERSHIP TO LEADERSHIP

At the Good Shepherd Services P.S.15 Beacon, the Pathways to Leadership program engages young people in contributing roles from early adolescence through adulthood. It creates connections among peers, continuity at the Beacon, and stability in the Red Hook community of Brooklyn. Through it, young people are supported at key transitions from elementary, to middle, to high school, and beyond, while contributing to the quality of programs in their community.

Goals of the Practice

The Pathways to Leadership program has been developed by the Good Shepherd Services' P.S.15 Beacon to help young people (ages 9 to 21) develop life skills that are essential for success in college, at work, in peer and family relationships, and in meeting challenges in their community and society. The program moves young people from after-school program participants to young professionals during their adolescent years. As participants grow in their roles as child care workers, relationships with staff and peers help them tap into their strengths and overcome challenges.

Specifically, the Pathways to Leadership program fosters the following outcomes for youth:

- a) Social competencies such as: collaboration, active listening, showing respect, helping others, and taking responsibility for their own behavior;
- b) Employment skills such as: team building, critical thinking, and taking initiative; and,
- c) Increased personal self-efficacy rooted in the accomplishment of community-service projects and the assumption of leadership roles.

Throughout their involvement in Pathways to Leadership, youth receive services while providing services to others in their community. This scaffolded system of support, skill building, and increasing levels of responsibility keep students actively participating and engaged in Beacon activities as they make their transition from childhood to adulthood.

Agency Description & Mission

Good Shepherd Services (GSS) is a non-sectarian social services and youth development agency which serves more than 18,000 children and families annually. Throughout its history, GSS has shown leadership in developing effective programs that help New York City's residents, especially those who are more vulnerable, gain the support, skills, and opportunities necessary for success in life. GSS has a strong history of developing community-based youth programs that provide not only services but also opportunities for young people to be active participants in program planning and implementation. Good Shepherd began its work in Red Hook, Brooklyn in 1980 when the agency was invited by residents and the NYC Mayor's Office to start South Brooklyn Community High School, a model alternative public high school for former dropouts.

Beacon Description

In 1991, GSS opened the Red Hook Beacon at PS 15, which was one of the ten original New York City Beacons. Today the Beacon facilitates a continuum of services that reach more than 1,500 Red Hook children, teens, and adults annually. Through after-school, evening, and summer programming, the Beacon provides a safe environment that encourages young people to take on increasing responsibility for their own growth and development. This continuum of youth programming creates a sustained and consistent transition

of youth involvement from childhood through late teens. The Beacon is fully integrated into PS 15 where it is located. Beacon staff meets with the administrative staff at PS 15 once every two months to discuss common issues.

History of the Practice

The Pathways to Leadership program has been a key component of the PS 15 Beacon since its inception in 1991. It has changed over time as the staff has sought better ways to reach the middle school population. In the early 90's, the Beacon found that attendance in its Pathfinders program, specifically geared toward middle-school youth, was diminishing. With a new grant, the Beacon sought to draw middle-school youth back to the Pathfinders program by connecting it to the newly-formed "Leaders in Training (LIT)" program. Now, youth in Pathfinders could become stipended LITs, which often led to a summer job and a job after school during the year. This immediate bridge to employment proved to be the critical incentive necessary to increase attendance.

In 2004, another change was made to the Pathfinders program. Rather than recruit only a portion of 5th graders for the Challengers group and a portion of 6th and 7th graders for the Pathfinders group, the Beacon decided to incorporate all its 5th, 6th, and 7th graders into the Pathways to Leadership program. In this way, the Beacon could build key social competencies in all its early adolescents through focused workshops and community service. In addition, the Beacon found that keeping their middle school youth together amidst a larger group of their peers increased youth's sense of belonging and kept attendance consistent and high.

Description of the Practice

Throughout the Pathways to Leadership program, participants build a wide array of specific and transferable skills by working within a professional

child care environment. At each stage, they master a variety of different skills: team work, communication, professional conduct, problem-solving, initiative-taking, conflict resolution, evaluation, and supervision. Moreover, the process of taking on greater roles and responsibilities at the Beacon deepens the young person's sense of belonging to the larger community, which they in turn transmit to the younger children they work with.

Participants learn child-care skills through workshops, trainings, and supervision, and, most importantly, through the development of strong relationships with the adult staff in the program. In these mentoring relationships, participants learn to recognize the unique strengths of each of the children they work with and how these individuals can function as a community. Beacon Director Jennifer Zanger describes this process as a set of concentric circles of youth development:

What a young person has experienced over the longevity of their involvement is what they can also begin to give – the expectation is not that our young professionals/participants stop getting nurtured by older staff, but the balance shifts and changes toward a more professional self who has the skills and self-awareness to contribute to the field of youth development by their direct service with children and youth.

Building Beacon Leadership over Time – Challengers

The Pathways to Leadership program starts with fifth grade students (ages 9 to 11), who join the Challengers group. The Challengers spend the school year engaging in community service projects that require collaboration, initiative, and team building. For example, the Challengers work with older youth to plan, coordinate, and carry out an

annual Thanksgiving community celebration that is attended by over 500 Red Hook children and families. Throughout the school year they continue to practice the skills of active listening, initiative, and service by working with Bacon sponsored projects in senior citizen and day care centers. In this introductory year, activities primarily focus on team building and community service activities remain focused within the program and closely supervised.

Pathfinders

As youth enter the sixth grade, they move on to the Pathfinders group (ages 11 to 14). Pathfinders, like Challengers, participate in community service projects such as coordinating the Halloween party for the Beacon and organizing parent involvement activities (such as a Spring Carnival with attendance of over 250 residents). But Pathfinders also begin to perform community service projects beyond the Beacon during the school year. Moreover, Pathfinders are challenged to begin to think of themselves as young professionals through weekly meetings that focus on developing skills such as problem solving, behavioral consistency, and group cohesion. They attend extensive job preparation/career readiness workshops which take place in the Beacon's computer facility. Pathfinders also serve as Youth Ambassadors, providing tours when guests visit the Beacon, and conduct outreach and orientation for new members.

Leaders-in-Training

The Leaders-in-Training (LIT) group (the next level of participation) engages youth from 13 to 16 years of age and is designed to bridge the gap between elementary school participants and older youth. Approximately 60% of Pathfinders go on to be LITs. For three days a week, the LITs serve as interns who help Beacon group leaders supervise younger after-school groups. Here, they get to practice what they have learned and receive a

variety of input from adult staff. For two days a week, they participate in trainings focused on work habits, public speaking, team-building skills, and child development. For this work they receive stipends of \$40 every two weeks.

Program Aide

If an LIT performs well in their internship, s/he has the opportunity to be hired on a part-time basis as a Program Aide. Program Aides (who range in age from 14-21) assist group leaders in monitoring the younger groups five days a week and receive salaries ranging from \$7.90 to \$11.15 per hour (depending on skills and education). The Program Aides receive hands-on mentoring and supervision through two sets of meetings: weekly meetings with their Group Leaders and in larger staff meetings with the Program Directors. Program Director Jose Cordero has weekly supervisory meetings with the six group leaders and the twelve program assistants independently. The group leaders and program assistants also meet together to address larger programming issues. It is worth noting that at the PS 15 Beacon, each level of staff is not just responsible to their immediate supervisors, but to the levels above and below them as well. This form of 360 degree accountability reinforces the principle among youth workers that they are not just responsible to their immediate supervisor, but to the larger Beacon community as well.

Program Aides also participate in two intensive training institutes per year. These four-day trainings are conducted by Beacon veteran staff and provide the Program Aides with workshops on topics including youth development, student safety, group management, conflict resolution, building positive relationships, how to run a successful activity, travel safety, swim safety, child abuse awareness, and group development. Through these trainings, the Program Aides develop a deeper level of understanding of what it

means to be engaged with a child. At the same time, the trainings serve as a refresher course in youth development principles for more veteran Beacon staff.

Group Leaders

The final rung in the ladder of leadership is the staff position of Group Leader. Group Leaders (ages 16 to 21) are part-time Beacon staff members who are responsible for planning and managing the activities of a group of twenty-five younger participants. They are supervised and mentored through weekly staff meetings with the Program Director and Assistant Program Director, and at the same time reinforce their skills by supervising and mentoring Program Aides, and serve as role models for the younger participants. They also participate in annual staff retreats designed to increase staff cohesion and further build key professional skills such as child-abuse awareness, planning time, how to run an effective group, and how to create a culture of belonging.

Being a group leader requires all of the professional skills of jobs at earlier stages as well as more sophisticated skills around negotiating between participants and collaborating with multiple partners. Group Leaders need to learn how to form positive partnerships with teachers, whose classrooms they share. They also need to be able to problem solve when something goes wrong in the group. Group leaders need to learn to talk to parents and inform them about their children then partner with them to help a child be successful in the program. Group leaders must master the skill of giving individual attention while still being aware of the group needs. Timeliness, completion of planning assignments, and participation in supervision and staff meetings all require a level of professionalism that will transfer to other jobs. Group Leaders make from \$14.15 –\$26.15 per hour, depending on their level of education, ranging from a high school diploma to a teaching certificate.

The skills youth develop in the Pathways to Leadership program are most easily framed in terms of career development. However, staff also encourage students to use these same competencies in other areas of their lives. Jennifer Zanger describes the transferable, interpersonal nature of the skills developed within the Pathways to Leadership:

There is absolute crossover into other aspects of youths' lives. The way a young person perceives themselves is not isolated to one area. For example, when a young person assumes real responsibilities at the Beacon, parents have tangible reasons to feel proud of their adolescent and see them as real contributors, which in turn influences relationships at home. Similarly, young staff who are not having success in academic subjects in school can see themselves as competent in other fields at the Beacon. As they develop relationships at the Beacon with adults they know and trust, they become more comfortable in reaching out and accepting help around academics.

Developing these competencies that empower youth in all aspects of their lives is fostered by a holistic, community model of youth development that guides all the programs of both the Beacon and its lead agency.

Structures that Support Practice - A Community Model of After-School Programming

The Pathways to Leadership program fits squarely within the community-development philosophy of its lead agency, Good Shepherd Services (GSS). GSS understands that creating programming for young people where they can build skills and meaningful relationships is key to lifelong success. This means enabling young people to grow

into roles where they are doing service through employment, internships, and/or community service. To support this goal, GSS has successfully requested funding to support stipends for Leaders-in-Training. This funding has been a huge incentive for youth to stay in the program and validates young peoples' sense of themselves as professionals.

Jennifer Zanger explains that there is an equally important synergistic relationship between the Beacon's youth programs and GSS's programs for families:

We view the [local] community and the family as a system. And rather than seeing the young person as an individual unit, we look at the youth as a part of that system. There are a number of families that are receiving comprehensive services from GSS. The parents are involved in their own prevention programs as well as having their children engaged in the Beacon's after-school program. This allows us to leverage change within the family from multiple points.

A place-based, community perspective also allows staff to view their Beacon as an organization at the center of a network of organizations in the local neighborhood of Red Hook that is willing to cooperate to leverage change. "In many ways, because of our longevity, we are a 'go to' organization for new CBOs starting out in the [local] community. We can help introduce new community organizations to the community [members], and in turn that builds a new relationship for us with which we can partner in the future," says Jennifer Zanger. The PS 15 Beacon currently has active partnerships with many city and community-based agencies, including: Red Hook Justice Center, Added Value, Falcon Works, Summer

Youth Employment Program and South Brooklyn Community High School, and the Parks Department, Public Library, the Department of Youth and Community Development of the City of New York.

Staff Training & Supervision

Another essential element to the P.S.15 Beacon's success is having staff members who are well trained and experienced in youth development practice. These staff members know how to focus on the strengths of youth and use those strengths as a jumping off point for engagement. The Beacon staff hones these skills in the GSS training institutes. GSS holds two "institutes" a year (one before the after-school program and one before the summer program) in which staff engage in 18-22 hours of training. This training is often done in conjunction with the other two Brooklyn sites, so that staff will see and understand themselves as part of a larger child-care community.

Jennifer Zanger elaborates on the content of the ongoing supervisory sessions at the Beacon itself: Supervision is the key to our retention and development of staff. The Beacon has a weekly staff meeting and there are separate weekly meetings for Program Aides and LIT's so that we can speak more to their developmental needs. Group leaders have an hour of supervision a week with either the program director or assistant director and use this time to dissect their group, examine their own practice, relate what is happening to their movement on the professional goals they have outlined for themselves, and think out loud about the dynamics of the group and their staff. This supervision time is critical to both the staff and the program. Staff must feel that they are in the process of growing as professionals and that they have a developing sense of awareness and ability to reflect and make changes in their own practice.

The Beacon at PS 15 relies on a core of three full-time veteran staff to supervise its after-school

programming and the Pathways to Leadership program. Program Director Jennifer Zanger oversees the supervision and development of the program. She has an MSW and credits her training in youth development to her 14 years of work at a neighboring social services agency—the Center for Family Life in the Sunset Park section of Brooklyn. There, she held a series of jobs: part-time caseworker, director of the counselor in training program, facilitator for the recreational reading program for the 300 children in after-school and eventually co-directed the Beacon program. She says, “The Center was pivotal in my training and grounding me both in youth development and social group work practice. I see the two as intertwined and have shaped training and supervision to emphasize this relationship in our practice and programs.”

The Assistant Director of After-school, Jose Cordero, creates schedules and times for the activities of Pathways to Leadership to take place. Jose also began his career at the Center for Family Life in Sunset Park, and he has worked in the field of youth development for twelve years. He is currently finishing up his BA with a degree in Community and Human Services. Jose sees the key characteristics necessary to perform his job as the following: organizational skills, flexibility, passion for the work, ability to supervise and train staff, an understanding of program development and developmental needs of youth that range from five to 25 years of age, the ability to form strong collaborative relationships with partner organizations, the ability to plan and facilitate staff meetings, and an ability to look through both micro and macro lenses at the program to determine when and how changes need to be made.

Staff Retention & Development

Jennifer Zanger underscores why staff retention is so important to this work: “...You build trust by building relationships. And because of the

longevity of the staff, the youth and their parents at this point know [and trust] the staff.” She identifies professional development as a key ingredient in keeping quality staff. She understands that good staff members are concerned about their long-term career goals and seeks to address those concerns:

We definitely do want to prepare our Beacon staff for higher careers. We'd like to do more professional development for them, to give them confidence in a wider variety of skills. While our staff has a high degree of training in youth work because of our supervision process, some of our staff continue to need help with their writing skills. We fear this will hold them back when they go for other positions. So we want to develop their academic as well as their youth development skills.

Currently 48% of staff (ten out of 21) at the Red Hook Community Center Beacon were formerly engaged in the program as participants. In addition, former Beacon participants who received their professional development via the Pathways to Leadership program comprised 10% of the staff at the P.S.27 after-school program in Red Hook and 23% of staff at the P.S.32 after-school program nearby.

The Challenge of Funding Streams for Youth Development Programs

One challenge to community-oriented, intergenerational youth development programs is the narrow categories through which funders measure impact. As Jennifer Zanger explains, “Some funders’ reporting requirements can be cumbersome, as they only count outcomes for middle-school youth in their outcomes boxes. Right now, only activities and programs that involve middle school children

are counted as outcomes. That is not broad enough for our targeted population.” This was a challenge mentioned by staff at other Beacons as well. By design, youth development activities target youth of all ages. Zanger and others would like to see these impact measures broadened to take into account direct and indirect family and community outcomes.

How the Practice Supports Participation, Retention, and/or Engagement – Engagement, Skill Development, and Leadership

In summation, as youth in Pathways to Leadership move through the various stages of the program, they acquire a wide array of skills and experiences that they then deploy in all aspects of their lives. This increases their confidence in their own abilities and enables them to take on greater levels of responsibility. As their capacity for responsible roles grows, their level of engagement with their community simultaneously deepens. Through this process, youth participants are gradually transformed into leaders.

For more information on the Good Shepherd Services Beacon at P.S.15, contact Jennifer Zanger at Jennifer_Zanger@goodshepherds.org.

3

The Beacons Movement and
Youth Programming

The Beacons Movement and Youth Programming

Beacons forge partnerships across public, non-profit, and private institutions to fortify neighborhoods. They create pathways for participation across age groups and a continuum of programming that promotes healthy development and strong families. They provide jobs to young people and adults, which contribute to local economic development. They help to make neighborhoods safe and connect residents to each other and to local resources. At a time when social services are increasingly located outside of the communities that need them, they serve as a hub for an array of social and educational supports.

Beacons were among the first citywide after-school initiatives. The massive expansion of after-school programs that began in 1992 was fueled in part by the early example of the Beacon movement. But while after-school programs use a service-delivery approach, Beacons use a comprehensive community development model with a focus on youth development. Activities in every area, from after-school to adult education, are embedded in the process of building community that:

- Supports and engages local youth.
- Feels a sense of ownership, with a desire to convert a school building into a community center.
- Recognizes and supports community resources, builds the capacity of youth and other community members to identify needs, address issues, and capitalize on different strengths.

The Beacons, while diverse and responsive to neighborhood interests and strengths, are shaped by a core set of youth development principles that

research has shown help people to achieve stronger outcomes: caring relationships, high expectations, opportunities to contribute, engaging activities, and continuity in relationships.

As a result of their experience in developing Beacons, many organizations that started as “mom and pop” associations in response to neighborhood needs now offer extensive family and youth-supporting services including foster care, drop out prevention, summer youth employment, and out-of-school time activities. In New York City and San Francisco, these organizations advance school reform efforts. Applying youth development principles and a commitment to the success of all students, they have helped to reshape high schools, making them more personalized, and sharply increasing graduation rates among youth who previously would have dropped out.

The Beacons provide multiple opportunities for young people to build the 21st-century skills that are essential to their development and success as workers, citizens, and environmental stewards. They help young people respond to the changing demands of the workplace and the increased need for post-secondary education. In Beacons, young people:

- Work in teams, solve problems, and master critical skills.
- Take on powerful roles that make a difference to their peers and their communities
- Get involved in planning projects, assessing their communities, analyzing results, and taking action to address local problems.
- Master core literacy skills in reading, writing, media, and technology.
- Teach, mentor, and serve as role models for

younger children.

- Collaborate with adults around important issues.

All these opportunities build the skills and knowledge the next generation needs to succeed in the 21st century and to sustain the well-being of the nation and earth.

Each Beacon city also includes an intermediary organization that provides training and support to the Beacon and works with policy makers to sustain the vision. For example, in New York City, the Youth Development Initiative, is one such intermediary that offers training and coaching to sites, develops programs, and works with the city and advocacy groups to support best practices. In San Francisco, the San Francisco Beacon Initiative, convenes a citywide group of leaders in philanthropy and public agencies to build support for the Beacons, raise funds, and provide training and related supports to sites.

Evidence of Success & Continuing Need

Evaluations in New York and San Francisco find that Beacons attract participants of all ages, many of whom attend on a regular basis. Participation by substantial numbers of adolescents, traditionally the hardest to recruit and retain in out-of-school programs, is the result of adherence to youth development principles. Among adolescents, the Beacons increase young people's self-efficacy and the level of effort they put into school, which are both critical factors in school success and persistence (Walker & Arbureton, 2004). They provide extensive homework help, enrichment activities that build skills and knowledge, and connections with schools and families on academic issues (Warren, 1999, pp 3-6). They help youth avoid negative behaviors such as drug use and fighting, and foster leadership and provide opportunities for volunteering and contributing to community (Ibid, p. 5). In neighborhoods like Red Hook in Brooklyn, where residents were once afraid to leave their apartments at night, the

Beacon is not only a haven, but has, through its programs and networks, made the whole community safer (see *Practices to Keep: Preventing Placement in Foster Care: Strengthening Family and Community Ties*. Youth Development Institute, 2009).

The need for Beacons and other programs that build on similar principles is more urgent today than ever. The economic crisis that began in 2008 has affected every sector of society, but will inevitably hit poor communities where Beacons are located the hardest. Too often, services are removed from the very neighborhoods where they are needed most. The Beacons place services in the center of poor communities. The gains that Beacons helped create must be protected, as need increases for comprehensive and coordinated services, high quality education, work preparation, and community safety. Beacons have earned the trust and respect of the local residents, and provide a tested infrastructure for attaching additional or consolidating programs.

Practices to Keep illustrates how Beacons provide young people with pathways to increasingly responsible roles, involve youth and adults in improving their communities, and create environments of support to keep families together. They all depend on partnerships and all recognize that their impact is inextricably tied to collective action. All told, these efforts add up to potent forces for local economic development and building cohesive communities.