



a new conversation about evaluation



Over a decade ago, one of the country’s leading scholars on afterschool, Robert Halpern, Ph.D., (Erikson Institute, retired) issued a strong response to the prevailing belief that afterschool “success” should be measured through better test scores and academic achievement. Dr. Halpern argued instead that the afterschool field should undertake basic research and develop appropriate metrics for the unique developmental experiences that afterschool programs provide. In this issue, we are pleased to introduce you to a true visionary in this arena, Kim Sabo-Flores, Ph.D., co-founder, CEO of Algorhythm (*pictured*).

As Kim Sabo-Flores sees it, every organization has the right to a strong and rigorous evaluation of their work. “Only 14% of small non-profits are currently evaluating their programs, which means they are less likely to receive funding,” she explains, “Since they are often reaching inner-city youth who may not walk through the doors of a larger organization, it is the young people who are hurt by this disparity. That’s why for me, it’s a question of equity.”

The author of several books on evaluation – and the groundbreaking founder of youth participatory evaluation – Dr. Sabo-Flores has spent much of her career making evaluation processes and products both useful and accessible to all. This led to the 2013 launch of [Algorhythm](#), an online platform that currently provides assessment and evaluation tools, analysis and improvement recommendations to 800 programs and 40,000 young people.

(continued) Dr. Sabo-Flores and her partners are using these tools and systems to help “flip the evaluation script” in the youth development field. As she explains, “Research now shows that it is *relationships*, be it peer to peer or youth and adults, that are more predictive of impact and success than any other indicator, including attendance or demographics. In other words, it is not what we are teaching, it is *how* we are teaching that makes the difference.”

As she sees it, this “revolutionary” new lens can help the non-profit and philanthropic sectors more accurately understand the impact youth-serving organizations are having by measuring things in their control and close to their values. As Dr. Sabo-Flores notes, “Even though many in these organizations are already doing relationship building, they are asked by funders to report on outcomes that have little to do with their mission. For example, most outside-of-school programs will never impact on school failure, but they are promoting the development of social emotional learning, which is now widely recognized as the strongest predictor of whether someone will get and keep a job.”