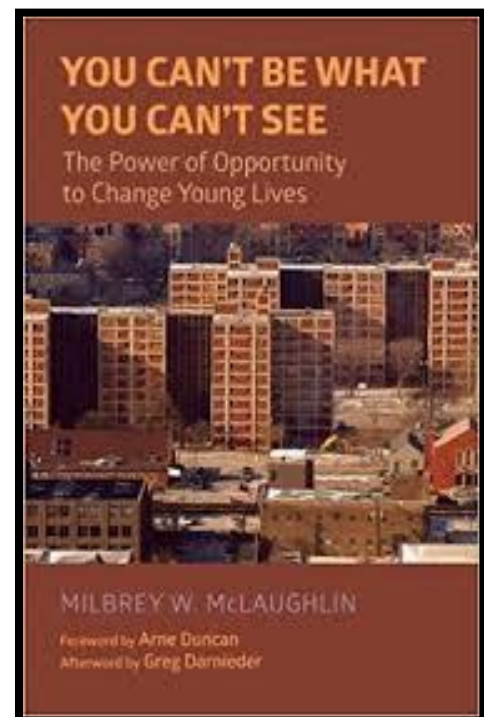




on the cutting edge

Book Review by **Bonny Gildin, Ph.D.**, Vice President of Afterschool Development Policy and Research, All Stars Project, Inc.

Milbrey McLaughlin's book, *You Can't Be What You Can't See, The Power of Opportunity to Change Young Lives* (Harvard Education Press), is a compelling must-read for everyone working on advancing the afterschool field. The book is a unique, longitudinal look at the "life outcomes" of participants in CYCLE, a comprehensive afterschool and support program that operated mid-1980 through mid-1990 in the Cabrini Green public housing project in Chicago. In Part 1 McLaughlin offers a detailed description of the CYCLE effort – tutoring, a junior staff leadership program and three scholarship programs. In Part 2, she reflects on "what mattered most" about the CYCLE experience over the long term and explores three features that CYCLE alumni – now in their 30s and even 40s – consistently pointed to as positively shaping their life trajectories: exposure, mentoring by caring adults and membership in a community of belonging. In Part 3, she focuses on what can and should be learned from the CYCLE experience by both practitioners and policymakers.



(continued) Indeed, there is much to be learned, both from CYCLE and from McLaughlin, a professor emeritus at Stanford and the founder of its John Gardner Center for Youth and their Communities. Throughout the book, she points to CYCLE's core commitment to, and prioritization of, developmental activity and relationship-building over any "top down" curriculum.

The title, a CYCLE staffer's play on the popular motivational slogan "be all that you can be," highlights, in my view, one of the afterschool development movement's most important understandings: that poverty locks young people into narrow and limited identities and ways of being and seeing; and that going new places, meeting new people and trying new things plays a critical role in reinitiating that development. Finally, McLaughlin's book is an important expansion of research on the long-term consequences of youth program participation and a strong counterpoint to the current focus on short-term outcomes.