

Q4 2022

play it forward



A quarterly newsletter for the Afterschool Development movement across America.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Play it Forward is a quarterly newsletter that introduces you to the builders and influencers in the field of Afterschool Development, offers updates on the latest and most innovative thinking and practices in the field and lets you know how you can become involved. Play It Forward also provides a forum for exploring some of the latest topics of interest in the Afterschool Development community.

To find out more about Afterschool Development [CLICK HERE.](#)

Building the future of afterschool development

“The key to working with young people is to lead with curiosity.”

For Tisa Morris, Executive Director of Community Engagement for the Cook County Sheriff’s Office, the key to successfully working with young people is to “lead with curiosity,” which means “reaching young people and making sure that we know what makes them tick and what makes them move.” A former prosecutor with the Cook County Prosecutors Office, Morris joined the Sheriff’s Office in 2018 because she was impressed by the creative programs Sheriff Thomas Dart was implementing to foster social and emotional growth for individuals in custody and awaiting trial. Under Dart’s leadership, Morris and her team have the freedom to “do whatever we come up with based on what we learn from the young people about what they need.”

When the Sheriff’s Office was asked to deal with kids causing trouble at the Chicago Public Library, “I assumed they wanted us to arrest the kids or use a ‘law enforcement’ approach. Instead, we asked them what they wanted to do when they weren’t in school. They said they wanted to play board games. So, we started Game Night at the library to do that with them. We came back every month, and eventually the kids came to us and said that they wanted to be doing more.”

A community partner of All Stars Project in Chicago and City Leader David Cherry since 2009, Morris joined Cherry’s Afterschool Development Working Group in 2017. There, she connected with [Willa Taylor](#), Education Director of the Goodman Theater in Chicago, who had always wanted to work with the Sheriff’s Office. They came up with ways that the Goodman could be part of Game Night, including *Play in 90* which engaged people of all ages in creating 90-minute improv plays. One, “Summer of Love,” was performed on stage at the Goodman. “It was wonderful to see three generations come together and share stories about what they love the most in their lives.” Now that Chicago has opened up, Morris looks forward to doing more – and continuing in the Working Group. “What I find most valuable is the togetherness, especially since there is so much our young people need. It’s an honor to be working with so many people who only want the best for them.”



Standing together for Chicago’s youth: Tisa Morris, Cook County Sheriff’s Office and David Cherry, ASP

On the cutting edge

As the public and private sectors search for new and more effective ways to foster personal and professional growth for the people and communities they engage, researchers across diverse disciplines are focusing on understanding the power of relationship-building for development.

In their chapter in [*It Takes an Ecosystem: Understanding the People, Places, and Possibilities of Learning and Development Across Settings*](#), Junlei Li and Dana Winters explore “[The Power of Simple, Ordinary Interactions in Developmental Relationships across Contexts](#).” They discuss how the visible impact of relational moments in seemingly routine interactions between staff and youth in diverse youth serving settings have inspired them to seed more conversation about relationship-building at the practice, programs and even policy levels. They collaborated with Tom Akiva at the University of Pittsburgh, as well as individuals and organizations across several countries, on a new tool that draws attention to the connecting, including, challenging and supporting aspects of “interactions.” A key goal is to demystify “developmental relationship” and illustrate that – and how – human relationships that support learning and development can be intentionally constructed from small, incremental building blocks of everyday interactions.

In November-December’s [Harvard Business Review](#), London Business School professor [Hermina Ibarra](#) explores the challenges of workplace mentorships and sponsorships that promise to both advance the careers of up-and-coming junior professionals and revitalize the impact of senior professionals. Ibarra hones in on a key quality of developmental relationships, which she calls “relational authenticity:” a two-way process in which both parties share their perspectives and make themselves open to hearing and learning from each other. She also identifies “trip wires” such as the “bring your whole self to work” paradox that can foil good relationship-building intentions.

Why is this research important? As Ibarra writes, “Let’s face it. We become who we are with help and support from those around us, and we all yearn for authenticity in our significant relationships.” Aligned with Li and Winters, she calls for the creation of “organizational conditions” that will allow for “new and transformational approaches to personal and professional growth” to emerge.



Hermina Ibarra, London Business School

“Let’s face it. We become who we are with help and support from those around us, and we all yearn for authenticity in our significant relationships.”

A new conversation about Evaluation

One of the featured sessions at this fall's [Philanthropy Southwest](#) Annual Conference of grantmakers was ["Evaluation Forward: Creating Partnerships Where Funders, Nonprofits and Evaluators Rise and Learn."](#)



Introduced by Leonard Krasnow, President, M.B. and Edna Zale

Foundation, the session brought together [Sarah Cotton Nelson](#) (strategy consultant and Independent Sector Bridging Fellow), [Elizabeth Wattleley](#) (CEO, Forest Forward), [Gabrielle Kurlander](#) (CEO, All Stars Project/ASP) and [Dr. Annie Wright](#) (Executive Director, SMU Center for Research and Evaluation/CORE). They shared their case studies of successful non-profit-evaluator collaborations to help the packed room of grantmakers think about evaluation and philanthropic partnership in new ways.

The panelists offered a strong argument for why, as Nelson asserted, "When it comes to evaluation, one size really does not fit all." Kurlander and Wattleley both wrestled with the fact that wanting to paint an accurate picture of their programs does not always align with what funders are looking for. A seasoned leader of a well-established, national nonprofit that makes use of novel practices for youth development, Kurlander described herself as an "evaluation doubter" who consistently pushed back against the call for proscriptive evaluation of programs. As she explained, "We didn't do evaluation because the existing models for evaluation - be they academic or designed to assess social emotional learning - did not measure what we were doing." When she hired CORE in 2015, the priority was to create metrics "for what we do." "Fortunately, our funders and leadership allowed us the flexibility and time to do this."

As the head of a much newer non-profit, still building support in its neighborhood and among geographic

stakeholders and donors across Dallas, Wattleley spoke about the challenges inherent in evaluation-related demands from foundations and donors before their doors and programs were even open. In 2019, her organization began working with CORE to create evaluation tools that guide organizational and mission planning rather than define organizational "success."



When it comes to evaluation...
One size does not fit ALL!

 

Gabrielle Kurlander, All Stars Project Elizabeth Wattleley, Forest Forward

As partner to both, Dr. Wright focused on figuring out what a "right-sized evaluation looks like and feels like." She agreed that one of the biggest pitfalls is funders asking to measure outcomes too soon. "What we did with ASP before we measured impact was to observe, participate, develop measures, get feedback, practice data collection, tweak data collection, pilot the tools, collect more data, run factor analysis and finalize the analyses. But what we are doing with Forest Forward reflects our understanding that, before we can measure impact we have to figure out how to get the eventual outcomes data we will need; analyze and interpret baseline data, establish strategies and activities, anticipate short term data collection needs."

Philanthropic Partnerships

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR FUNDERS

“It’s important that we use data as a flashlight not as a hammer.”



Annie Wright, SMU CORE

What was Wright’s advice to philanthropic partners? “If you want evaluation, you need to fully fund it, including the new capabilities organizations need to do it. But you don’t always have to do an evaluation, or not right now. Funders also need to understand what works, for which organizations, and under what circumstances. And we need to value the qualitative: the stories from people served are a legitimate way to evaluate what’s working.”

For Nelson, who spent 14 years at Communities Foundation of Texas enhancing its policies and procedures to ensure more inclusive and equitable grantmaking, “It’s important that we use data as a flashlight not as a hammer. Partnership happens best when the data being collected is useful to all parties, and most relevant to the nonprofit. The philanthropic community needs to be open to hearing why the non-profit is measuring something that may be different what we want. We want to encourage foundations to give adequate grace and space for creativity and flexibility at key junctures in evaluation planning and implementation.”



Sarah Cotton Nelson

Sign Up Today!

In [Afterschool Development Working Groups](#) (ADWG), leaders and frontline practitioners come together to create a rich and vibrant environment for exploring new ways of thinking, learn innovative practices, and create partnerships that both strengthen the field and help meet the day to day demands of their work.

Working group meetings are open to afterschool practitioners and leaders across the country.

to sign up for a working group or contact Kathy Fiess at kfiess@allstars.org or 917-969-2627.



let's talk

Please share your responses to anything in Play it Forward and thoughts you have on Afterschool Development and what it means for our communities and country.

[CLICK HERE TO TELL US WHAT YOU THINK](#)

Or email Kathy Fiess at kfiess@allstars.org



spread the word

Share Play It Forward with others and invite them to

[SUBSCRIBE](#)





coming up

In the Next Quarter Issue of *Play it Forward*:

In the Field – Profiles of people on the frontlines in our communities who are changing lives and making a difference.

Building the Future of Afterschool Development – Updates on the issues that practitioners, academics, and business, civic and community leaders are coming together to discuss in Afterschool Development working groups and conferences.

On the Cutting Edge – The latest developments in thought leadership, research and policy helping to shape the conversation about Afterschool Development, education and poverty in America.

Philanthropic Partnerships – Featuring partners and funders who are stepping up and investing in Afterschool Development and its growth nationally.

A New Conversation about Evaluation – Highlights of the growing national conversation about evaluation and the need for new tools.



www.allstars.org

FOLLOW US



[Unsubscribe](#)

All Stars Project