

Fall 2023

# 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 Chicago Afterschool Development Working Group (ADWG), a grassroots group of practitioners and leaders in the afterschool and youth development arena, has been working in new and creative ways on growing recognition for the critical importance of afterschool.

In April the ADWG partnered with the Out of School Time Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) in sponsoring a panel discussion on how to build stronger, more thoughtful and more reciprocal partnerships.



Doubling down on the important topic of partnership building, the ADWG devoted its spring and summer meetings to discussion and workshops on “The ‘How’ of Developing Partnerships”. These workshops used improv and breakout sessions to get everyone talking and thinking about how to build partnerships (big and small) that help to advance their on-the-ground work and expand resources for our young people.

**JULIE LENNER**  
JK Lenner Consulting

**NICOLE BRUCE**  
Youth Guidance

**KATHY FIESS**  
All Stars Project of Chicago

**SYNTHESIZING STRENGTHS**  
A Nonprofit Sector That Works Together  
BREAKOUT SESSION

**GET INTO THE ZONE OF**  
» “BOTTOM UP” COLLABORATION «

On October 20, ADWG leaders and builders Kathy Fiess (All Stars Project), Nikki Bruce (Youth Guidance) and Julie Lenner (JK Lenner Consulting) took this “bottom-up” approach to partnership-building to the annual conference of the Axelson Center for Nonprofit Management, Synthesizing Strengths: A Nonprofit Sector That Works Together. In their workshop, Get Into the Zone of ‘Bottom Up’ Collaboration, they shared how the ADWG came to be and

how it has led to impactful organic collaboration, partnerships and professional development. Through interactive activities, participants got some “hands-on” experience with tools they can use to further collaboration and partnership building in their work.

To join an Afterschool Development Working Group in your area, [click here](#).

# On the cutting edge

An educational tester who helps develop large scale assessments and self-described “life-long learner,” Jazzme Blackwell has devoted the last five years pursuing a doctorate in education at Rutgers University in New Jersey. For his dissertation, he wanted to address the relative absence of research on “...how the social contexts of marginalized youth are considered in afterschool programming, especially those that are workforce readiness-focused” and expand understanding of “whether and how these programs work for this population.”

Rutgers Associate Professor of Education Carrie Lobman connected Blackwell with the All Stars Project, which had successfully moved its Development School for Youth (DSY) program onto Zoom during the pandemic and was agreeable to his observing its spring 2021 program sessions. The lion’s share of the data gathering took place through these observations.

Blackwell’s study framework was informed by three approaches: 1) [The Learning Framework](#) established by Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) to assist educational institutions with integrating 21st century skills into three main curricula, including life and career skills; 2) [Critical Positive Youth Development](#) (CPYD), because it “considers the obstacles faced by marginalized youth such as poverty, exposure to violence, etc., when designing intervention programming and 3) [performance pedagogy](#) which, as Blackwell notes, is what DSY “is all about.” Performance pedagogy would become “very dominant” in how he viewed the study. “I would hear students talking about how much being part of a performance ‘ensemble’ was helping them to develop. This notion of developing as part of the group tied into CPYD, which believes in the importance of young people not only having supportive relationships but spaces that allow them to create new identities.”

“One of the things that impressed me the most,” he continues, “is the relationships and networks young people are able to form with caring adults, which provide access to opportunities they would otherwise never have. This allows for the building of social capital and for the integration of Black and minority students within predominantly white business settings.”

Though not every youth or workforce readiness program needs to use performance to create “ensembles,” Blackwell believes it is important for programs to create spaces in which young people can learn from each other and the entire group.

Blackwell’s hope is that his study will be used to better inform decisions on programming. “It’s not enough for Black and brown kids to make up the majority of your program, you’ve got to utilize approaches that support the most marginalized of our young people, regardless of their educational level or life challenges, to thrive in the workplace and in life.”



Jazzme Blackwell, EdD

“In all of the sessions I observed and in all of my interviews, I would hear students talking about how much being part of a performance ‘ensemble’ was helping them to develop.”

# A new conversation about Evaluation



“Many afterschool development stakeholders believe their programs not only change the lives of the young people they touch directly but that their efforts also have a “ripple effect,” contributing to change at a larger scale. In a recent *Stanford Social Innovation Review* article, nonprofit strategist, Brett Davidson, addresses the issue of measuring “ripple effects,” in particular of narrative change, the changing of stories and interpretations about the world, how it works and the solving of its problems.

**Jazzme Blackwell, EdD**

Davidson recommends starting with “...finding ways to measure and assess what is closest...and the power [of an organization’s stories] to influence in the near term and expand in ever-increasing circles as time goes on”. This might involve investigating questions like, “Are our organization’s narrative capabilities improving? Have we developed compelling new language, stories, and frames? Have we managed to collaborate with others in the field on developing these? Have we tested them with our envisaged audience and adapted/changed accordingly?”

Davidson offers the Frameworks Institute’s [Culture Change Project](#) as an example of an organization that has embraced this measurement work. Play It Forward invites our readers to share the “ripple effects” your programs are having – and what aspects of this extended impact you would like to measure. Send your stories, questions and comments to Kathy Fiess at [kfiess@allstars.org](mailto:kfiess@allstars.org) and we’ll feature them in upcoming issues.



# Philanthropic Partnerships



Eager to grow the diversity of applicants and staff in public accounting and professional services, KPMG worked with nonprofit partners to launch the [EMPOWER High School Program](#). In summer 2023 EMPOWER provided 174 students with a three-week internship in 11 markets (Hartford, New York City, Orlando, Chicago, St. Louis, Dallas, Houston, Denver, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Atlanta). According to KPMG’s Director of Community Impact, Jennifer Flynn Dear, the program “is designed to immerse students in our KPMG culture, build a sense of belonging in a professional setting, and provide an opportunity for interns to interact with KPMG mentors as they begin to navigate their academic and career journey.”

The decision to launch EMPOWER grew out of the KPMG’s understanding that the lack of diversity in the accounting field is not due to a lack of talent, but a lack of access and awareness. Those who pursue accounting are typically introduced to it by family members, so many from underrepresented groups may have little or no exposure to the field. KPMG also understands that high school is a critical point for young people. It is using internships to introduce and inspire junior and seniors to pursue this career.

KPMG reached out to the [Accounting Career Awareness Program](#) (ACAP), [All Stars Project](#), [Big Brothers Big Sisters](#), [Cristo Rey](#), [Junior Achievement](#) and [NAF](#) to collaborate on this new initiative that offered support in a number of areas, including financial literacy, technology access, social justice, and belonging (how to bring your whole self to work). In addition to stipends for participating young people, each collaborating organization received financial support from KPMG.

# 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](mailto: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](mailto:kfiess@allstars.org)



## spread the word

Share Play It Forward with others and invite them to

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## 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.



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