TRI-STATE SUMMIT

Meeting the Needs of Disadvantaged Youth in the Afterschool Hours

A Report from the Hunt Institute
INTRODUCTION

The *Tri-State Summit: Meeting the Needs of Disadvantaged Youth in the Afterschool Hours* was hosted by the James B. Hunt, Jr. Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy on December 3-4, 2009 in Charlotte, North Carolina. The event was planned in partnership with the Georgia Afterschool Investment Council, the North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs, and the South Carolina Afterschool Alliance.

The current economic crisis has put an enormous strain on state budgets across the United States. In many cases, funding for youth services has been drastically reduced, or worse, entirely eliminated. Within this bleak economic landscape, it is more important than ever for state agencies and non-profit organizations to collaborate and maximize efforts and resources that keep disadvantaged youth engaged and connected to key supports. As John Doman, executive director of the Public School Forum of North Carolina, pointed out, “Necessity may be the mother of invention that finally allows our states to break free from the silos within which we traditionally operate.” Within this context, the *Tri-State Summit* brought together 78 participants from all three states, representing a variety of sectors including education, health and human services, and juvenile justice, as well as state agencies, non-profit organizations, and the business community.

During the course of two days, experts detailed varying issues faced by disadvantaged youth and the role that cross-sector collaboration can play in improving their circumstances. Smaller breakout sessions also highlighted four programs that have been successful in integrating services for youth: The Harlem Children’s Zone, Elev8 New Mexico, the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice’s Teen After-School Centers, and the Center of Hope Boys and Girls Club in Charlotte, NC (for more information on these programs, see the spotlight sections throughout this report). On the second day, participants met with their individual state teams and created action plans to further the conversations started at the *Summit*. This report provides a brief synopsis of the event and subsequent activities in states.
DISADVANTAGED YOUTH IN THE TRI-STATE REGION

As the South continues to outpace the rest of the country in population and job growth and grows more diverse, it becomes more important to identify youth who are falling through the cracks of the systems responsible for them. In Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina, there are 4.1 million children ages 5 to 17 years-old. Of those children, almost one-third live below the poverty line, and more than 60 percent live in low-income households (see table below). Children from low-income families have far less access to resources than their more advantaged peers and are more likely at risk for dropping out of school, teen pregnancy, and juvenile delinquency. These issues are not new ones for any of the three states. In his presentation, Ferrel Guillory of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill’s Program on Public Life provided participants with a snapshot of disadvantaged youth in Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina:

▼ **Dropout:** In 2008, there were 108,000 16-to-19 year-olds who were high school dropouts in Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Eight percent of 16-to-19 year-olds in Georgia and North Carolina were dropouts, as well as seven percent in South Carolina. All three states were above the US average of six percent.

▼ **Teen Mothers:** More than 67,000 teenage girls between the ages of 15 and 19 were teen mothers in Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina in 2005 (the most recent year data are available). All three states had rates above the US rate (see chart on next page).

### Children in Poverty and Low-Income Households in Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Number of School-Age Youth</th>
<th>Number/Percent of Children in Poverty</th>
<th>Number/Percent of Children in Low-Income Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>1.8 million</td>
<td>502,000 (27.9%)</td>
<td>1.08 million (60.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>1.6 million</td>
<td>440,000 (27.5%)</td>
<td>949,000 (59.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>760,000</td>
<td>228,000 (30%)</td>
<td>478,000 (62.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.1 million</td>
<td>1.17 million (28.5%)</td>
<td>2.5 million (61%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Kids Count, 2008*
Juvenile Crime: In all three states, thousands of youth are involved with the juvenile justice system each year. Additionally, more than one million youth in Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina are unsupervised afterschool (see chart below). Research has shown that juvenile crime spikes between the hours of 3 and 6PM, presenting additional challenges as we work to meet the needs of disadvantaged youth and keep them primed for graduation and post-secondary success.

While Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina have various programs that address issues such as dropout, health, and juvenile crime prevention, most of these efforts exist in isolation of each other. Given the tight economic situations in all three states, it would be a powerful and more efficient use of state resources to consider ways in which state agencies, as well as non-profits and service providers, could collaborate on issues of joint concern and focus their collective will — and budgets — to find policy solutions.

**SPOTLIGHT PROGRAM**

**Elev8 New Mexico**

Elev8 New Mexico is part of a national effort that provides a tightly woven network of services that meets the needs of the whole student in a middle school space so they are healthy, supported, and successful in life. Elev8 New Mexico fosters a full-service school approach through a set of partnerships among the school, local community, and public and private entities to make the best use of public schools and community resources. This is accomplished by bundling school-based health, extended learning, and family engagement services in each of five middle schools across the state.

Working together as a public-private partnership, Elev8 New Mexico strives to decrease the likelihood of drug and alcohol use, crime, and other risky activities after school and at other times; provides needed health and wellness programs; recognizes cost savings by capitalizing on existing resources; creates students ready for 21st century jobs in a global economy; and encourages parents to participate in their students’ education. For more information on Elev8 New Mexico, please visit [www.nmcf.org/?page_id=215](http://www.nmcf.org/?page_id=215).
**Harlem Children’s Zone**

Called “one of the most ambitious social-service experiments of our time” by The New York Times, the Harlem Children’s Zone® Project (HCZ) is a unique, holistic approach to rebuilding a community to help children stay on track through college and into the job market. The goal is to create a “tipping point” in the neighborhood so that children are surrounded by an enriching environment of college-oriented peers and supportive adults, a counterweight to “the street” and a toxic popular culture that glorifies misogyny and anti-social behavior. In January 2007, the HCZ Project launched Phase 3, expanding its comprehensive system of programs to nearly 100 blocks of Central Harlem.

The HCZ pipeline begins with The Baby College®, a series of workshops for parents of children ages 0-3. The pipeline goes on to include best-practice programs for children of every age through college. The network includes in-school, afterschool, social-service, health, and community-building programs. For children to do well, their families have to do well. And for families, to do well, their community must do well. That is why HCZ works to strengthen families as well as empowering them to have a positive impact on their children’s development. HCZ also works to reweave the social fabric of Harlem, which has been torn apart by crime, drugs, and decades of poverty.

George Khaldun, Chief Operating Officer of the HCZ Project, shared this model with participants in two breakout sessions at the Tri-State Summit. North Carolina team participant, Mayor Susan Klutz of Salisbury, NC, was especially impressed with the model and invited Khaldun to present at the Salisbury City Council’s 25th Annual Goal Setting Retreat in February 2010. For more information on the Harlem Children’s Zone project, please visit www.hcz.org.

**CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS**

Even when states recognize that collaboration could benefit the children they are serving, there are barriers that often stand in the way of success (see box). In order to reap the benefits of successful interagency collaboration, states must work on creating conditions to overcome these barriers.

Participants at the Summit discussed many of these barriers and how they affect their work with disadvantaged youth. As Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina continue working to improve outcomes for disadvantaged youth through collaboration, they should consider the following implications:

1) **Thorough and frequent gap analyses are vital.** It is important for states to be aware of critical gaps in services, as well as areas where there may be redundancies. By consistently examining what services are provided across agencies, states can identify these gaps, and agencies can work cooperatively to ensure that all needs are being met. In areas where programs may be serving the same target population, agencies can pool their resources to save on administrative and material costs.

2) **Flexibility is key.** In order for cross-collaboration to be successful, agencies and programs must be allowed a certain degree of flexibility, especially in the early stages. Often, funding for programs is very tightly controlled through statute or other regulations. If states wish to encourage collaboration and the potential cost savings it could bring, it is important to allow agencies or programs flexibility in the use of their funds. Likewise, while accountability is crucial, agencies and programs that are attempting to pool resources must be allowed an initial window of time to work out any issues and determine the appropriate chain for accountability.
3) **Creating incentives and avoiding unintended disincentives is critical.** Too often, agencies are leery of collaboration because disincentives exist within the system. It is important for states to carefully review existing policies, statutes, and regulations that could deter an agency from seeking to collaborate with another in an area where there is overlap. For example, agencies may be wary of losing funding if they combine a program with that of another agency, especially in these tough budget times. Allowing agencies to reallocate money saved through collaboration is one way to alleviate this fear.

4) **Tracking individual students is essential.** A unique student identifier shared across agencies will allow states to track individual students and connect them both to their classrooms and the various programs that serve them. This allows states to identify promising programs, as well as those initiatives which are not effective. It also makes it easier to connect youth to the services they need and identify those who are at risk of dropping out or entering the juvenile justice system.

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**Potential Barriers to Successful Collaboration**

- Insufficient awareness of program variety and services that are available to disadvantaged youth
- Undefined leadership for partner collaboration
- Unclear collaborative vision or goals
- Presence of “turf” or territorial issues (i.e. an agency is not willing to give up ownership of a particular program)
- Inflexible funding allocated to serve a particular type of youth or program
- Absence of financial or regulatory incentives for agency collaboration
- Common language or definitions do not exist among agencies
- Uncertainty over accountability for services/programs offered under a collaborative system
- Absence of a system to share data or difficulty accessing and sharing data due to confidentiality issues

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**SPOTLIGHT PROGRAM**

**Center of Hope Boys and Girls Club**

The Center of Hope Boys and Girls Club in Charlotte, NC is the only Boys and Girls Club in the country that is operated within a homeless shelter. The Club was started in 2006 to address the community’s growing need. The goal is to provide homeless children with a safe, accessible place to go after school with caring adults. The Club helps children develop a sense of belonging, usefulness, competence, and power through numerous activities including tutoring; alcohol, drug, smoking, and gang-related prevention programs; citizenship and leadership activities; sports and recreation; and special events. The Club has many collaborative partners including Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation; Boy Scouts of America; Girl Scouts of America; A Child’s Place, which provides educational services for homeless children and their families; and Melange Health Solutions. There is also an on-site health clinic at the shelter. For more information about the Center of Hope, please contact Deronda Metz, Director of Social Services, at dmetz@usf.salvationarmy.org.
South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice’s Teen After-School Centers

Research has demonstrated that the hours between the end of the school day and when parents return from work is a risky time for young people and that serious and violent crimes committed by juveniles increase between these times. To address this issue, the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), in collaboration with the South Carolina Black Caucus, the faith-based community, and a host of other partners, started funding and supporting Teen After-School Centers in early 2004 to serve at-risk youth. The 20-plus established Centers are spread out throughout the state and are an outreach of DJJ’s goal to engage the community in working with at-risk youth to combat youth delinquency through intervention methods and educational programs.

The Centers offer teenagers educational support, tutoring, employment training, life skills classes, and recreational activities on afternoons and weekends. Teenagers can be referred to Centers by parents, school resource officers, the Family Court, or DJJ.

The Centers use volunteers and paid staff from all walks of life to mentor youth as they develop into productive citizens. Funding is provided by DJJ and supported through technical assistance from the State Department of Education’s 21st Century Grants, South Carolina Afterschool Alliance, Communities In Schools, Clemson University, and South Carolina State University’s 1890 Research and Extension Project. For more information, please visit www.state.sc.us/djj/pdfs/TASC.pdf.
Since the Summit, all three states have been working hard to ensure that the momentum gained at the event continues. Each state has chosen a strategic path as they continue to pursue the ideas generated in the state team planning sessions.

North Carolina: In February 2010, the North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs (NCCAP) reconvened its state team members and continued working on their action plan. The team is currently in the process of planning four to eight regional summits designed to replicate the Tri-State Summit. These regional summits will be held throughout 2010 and will bring together stakeholders from the education, juvenile justice, and health and human services communities at the local level. These meetings will create local momentum that can then build up action at the state level, with an ultimate goal of creating a comprehensive statewide children’s plan with goals and benchmarks. NCCAP is currently discussing a partnership with the Metropolitan Mayors Association, which may play a role in hosting the regional summits.

South Carolina: The South Carolina team ended the Summit with an exciting announcement: Judge William Byars, director of the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice, pledged five staff members from the Department of Juvenile Justice to work with the South Carolina Afterschool Alliance on afterschool issues. Zelda Waymer, director of the Alliance, said the Summit had really energized their state team. They have recently met with Judge Byars to talk about how best to incorporate these five positions. Additionally, Waymer and her staff are creating a detailed action plan that will be sent to their state team members in advance of their next meeting.

Georgia: The Georgia Afterschool Investment Council shared many of the ideas discussed during the event at their Mayors’ Summit in January 2010 and had over one-third of the mayors in attendance commit to hosting mini-forums focused on cross-sector collaboration in partnership with the Council. The Georgia team continues to plan a follow-up meeting that builds on the Summit’s discussions.
Special thanks to our partners on the Tri-State Summit.

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