

# Common Measures for After-School Programs and Systems

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*Youth Funders Forum*

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# Agenda

1. CBASS overview
2. Why develop common measures across programs and systems?
3. The Measurement Framework
4. Outcomes and Quality: On the Ground Perspective
5. Lessons learned

## CBASS: Who we are

*CBASS is a collaborative formed by the leaders of local after-school intermediaries in eight jurisdictions with the goal of making after-school part of the system of essential services that support children and youth.*



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## CBASS: What we do

CBASS works to increase the availability of quality after-school nationwide through several strategic activities:

1. **Shape policy** around a shared set of challenges.
2. **Test the feasibility** of policy recommendations through demonstration projects.
3. **Build the field** through knowledge dissemination and targeted technical assistance to emerging systems.

# Why common measures across programs and systems?

## **The Problem**

- Different priorities and definitions for success and quality among stakeholder groups.
- Evaluations designed to measure quality and programs across a system of programs are rare.

## **Strategy**

Adopt and track progress against a small number and common set of outcomes at the youth, program and systems level

## **Benefit**

- Define for the field appropriate measures of success.
- Hold programs accountable to a streamlined set of measures.
- Improve program quality at scale.
- Demonstrate after-school's contribution to the successful development of youth.
- Demonstrate the value of systems-building and role of intermediary.

# Objectives of the Measures Framework

**To identify measures of after-school success that can:**

1. Demonstrate accountability to stakeholders
2. Assess value to youth of high-quality programming at scale
3. Inform continuous improvement

# Criteria for Measures

## Criteria:

- Low measurement burden
- Low inference
- Applicability across age groups
- Field-tested/research based
- Strengths focused

# Features of Framework

- Support **aggregation** from youth level to program level to system level
- Allow **choice and flexibility** in measurement at youth, program, and system levels
- Permit programs and systems to hold themselves **accountable** locally
- Generate information that supports **improvement** at program and system levels

# Logic Underlying Youth Measures

## *Questions:*

- Do after-school offerings promote high levels of **youth engagement**?
  - Daily program attendance
  - Annual retention
  
- Are positive program experiences reflected in **educational effort, commitment and skills**?
  - School attendance
  - Grade promotion
  - Mastery of academic and non-academic skills

# Logic Underlying Program Measures

*Question:* Are the initiative's program-level features capable of promoting positive youth outcomes?

- **Structural** features (staffing, staff qualifications, family outreach, youth input)
- **Activity** features (relationships; opportunities for choice and skill application; activity content, intentionality, breadth)

# Logic Underlying System Measures

*Question:* Do systems display features consistent with growth in system-level scale and quality?

- Adoption and use of **system-wide tools** (tracking, partner agreements, standards, training, sustainable support, unified governance)
- Evidence of **scale** (number of slots, engagement of leaders across sectors)

# CBASS Measurement Framework

To track at scale:	To track with a subset or sample of programs:
<p><b>Youth level</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily program attendance</li> </ul>	<p><b>Youth level</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily school attendance</li> </ul>
<p><b>Program level</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth to staff ratio</li> <li>• Breadth of age-appropriate content and activities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Program level</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth relationships with adults</li> <li>• Youth opportunities for activity choice</li> <li>• Active, hands-on learning opportunities</li> <li>• Educational level of director and staff</li> </ul>
<p><b>System level</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of program slots</li> <li>• Adoption &amp; use of quality standards</li> <li>• Use of participant tracking systems, with data aggregation &amp; reports</li> <li>• CBO/intermediary partner agreements and policies in place</li> <li>• Provision of technical assistance and staff training</li> <li>• Sustainable financial support</li> <li>• Engagement of leaders across youth-serving organizations</li> </ul>	

## So what? What story does the data tell us?

### Research questions:

1. To what extent is data collected for each measure, what scale, frequency, methods, lead agency?
2. How is the data used to improve program quality and management of resources?
3. Among measures not currently implemented, what are the highest priority to implement at scale?
4. What are the barriers to broad collection of data?

## Early Findings

- Data collection most limited at the youth level, with exception of daily program attendance, with respect to five youth measures.
- High priority measures=daily school attendance and on-time grade promotion.
- Scale tied to burden
- Address scale and burden through sampling
- Common measures don't require common tools
- Data is used to drive improvement

## Later Findings

- Tools and scales vary across jurisdictions limiting ability to make comparisons.
- Youth level
  - Daily program attendance, not as clear cut as we expected.
  - School attendance is an important youth outcome measure.
- Programs level
  - Programs scored high on youth relationships with adults, opportunities for activity choice, and variety of hands-on learning.

# Quality Improvement Cycle: PASA's Approach

## Systemic Connections

- Adopted by 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC
- Recommended by local funders
- Aligned with Bright Stars quality rating system

## Quality Standards

- What exists
- What we know
- What works
- Based on national examples

## Quality Indicators

- Measure of standards
- Promising practices
- Provider/Community Input

## Capacity Building/ Professional Development

- Site-based technical assistance
- Quality coaches
- BEST Youth Worker Training
- Training series aligned with RIPQA

## Tracking Tool

- Youthservices.net
- Participation & retention data
- Citywide data management system

## Self-Assessment Tool

- Partnership with High/Scope and Weikart Center
- Rhode Island Program Quality Assessment Tool (RIPQA)
- Adopted by 21st CCLC initiative and in use statewide

## Implications for your work: strengthening systems

- Vehicle for sharing best practices
- Incentivize data collection around measures directly relevant to after-school
- Compare apples to apples across programs
- Foster culture of continuous improvement

## Lessons Learned

- Iterative process
- Difficult to identify youth outcome measure that met our criteria, valued by stakeholders, and captured 21<sup>st</sup> Century, social/emotional skills.
- Challenge to collect and analyze data across systems.
- What story does the data tell?: turning point

## Recommendations

- Establish a policy goal and criteria to guide and keep effort grounded
- Engage stakeholders to reach consensus on small group of measures, aligned with national efforts
- Allow for flexibility
- Consider investing in the capacity to compare data across cities
- Consider investing in local capacity efforts/pilot to implement a measurement framework

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