Parent Town Hall Summary Report: Expanding Quality After School Options in Prince George’s County

New Carrollton, MD November 16, 2013

On November 16th, more than 50 Prince George’s County residents joined education, philanthropic, child care and community leaders from across the County at the Metro Points Hotel in New Carrollton to explore strategies to enable all parents in Prince George’s to have access to quality after school options for their children.

The program featured presenters from the Maryland Out of School Time Network, the Parent Leadership Training Institute, the Prince George’s Child Resource Center, The Prince George’s County Social Innovation Fund, Prince George’s County Public Schools, and the American Youth Policy Forum. The central focus of the day was on participant discussions in roundtables of seven that centered on issues of parental needs for after school programs, challenges in accessing quality after school programs, critical partnerships to expand access and quality, and parental roles for ensuring greater access and quality after school options in the county.

Throughout the meeting, participants used keypad polling to register their views and engaged in facilitated group discussions about strategies, resources, etc. needed for Prince George’s County families to be able to access quality after school programs. Participants also weighed in on the extent to which after school programs should be connected to student learning. The Town Hall utilized a methodology from AmericaSpeaks, a nonprofit, non-partisan organization that engages citizens in the public decision-making that affects their lives. An overview of participants’ views and the key findings from the day are outlined below and in the subsequent pages.

Key Findings from the Day:

- **The Cost Challenge:** Participants saw cost as the biggest challenge to all children having access to high quality after school programs, followed by the challenge of transportation of getting kids to and from after care.
- **Factors in Choosing Care:** Participants identified cost, proximity to home/school/ work, and the actual educational program that is offered as the top three factors that go into choosing an after school program.
- **Information on Quality:** A common theme to several of the conversations was the need for parents to have greater access to information about quality (how it is defined and measured).
- **Access:** A second common theme across several conversations was the need in the county to have more widespread and equal access to high quality after school programs.
- **Alignment:** Participants expressed a need to have after school programs “moderately aligned” with the academic curriculum but in ways that are fun and interesting. For example, they wanted to see “more support” of the curriculum in these programs “but not a rehash of what they’ve learned (in school).” They thought the programs should “extend learning but be more interesting.” And, they wanted to see a “broad range of activities to meet the interest and needs of diverse youth,” while also using non-traditional methods.

- **Parental Role:** Participants believed that parents need to play an active role in ensuring their kids participate in quality after school programs but also that parents together must begin to advocate for the improvement of after school programs.

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Prince George’s County residents gather in New Carrollton to discuss Quality After School Programs.
Who Attended the Parent Town Hall?

Gender
- Female 82%
- Male 18%

Age
- 15 to 24 2%
- 25 to 34 5%
- 35 to 44 38%
- 45 to 54 24%
- 55 to 64 26%
- 65 and better 5%

Race/Ethnicity
- African American/Black 71%
- Asian/Pacific Islander 0%
- Hispanic/Latino 0%
- White or Caucasian 27%
- Other or more than one race 2%

Where in County
- Northern County 46%
- Central County 34%
- South County 8%
- Dedicated to the county but live outside it 12%

Household Income
- Under $25,000 0%
- $25,000 to $50,000 8%
- $50,000 to $75,000 7%
- Over $75,000 75%
- Not Sure 10%

Why Quality is Important to Participants?
- Children need a safe place to go after school
- It can be challenging for working parents to provide transportation from school
- After school programs should enhance students’ academics, including STEM learning
- Parents want quality after school care to fulfill students’ emotional and social needs
- Service providers want to find out what parents need
- Parents need quality after school options for special needs students
- Parent-community engagement and community partnerships are essential
- After school care must be affordable for working parents

After School Program Polling
If you have kids, what grade are they in? (pick all that apply)
- 0-Pre-Kindergarten 14%
- K-6 40%
- Grades 7-12 38%
- Post-secondary 10%
- I don’t currently have kids or kids of school age 33%

If you have kids in school (preK-12) right now, are they in? (pick all that apply)
- Public school(s) 43%
- Public charter school(s) 14%
- Private school(s) 27%
- I don’t currently have kids or kids of school age 32%

If your kids attend daily after school programs, what type do they participate in? (pick all that apply)
- After School Tutoring (enrichment) program 19%
- After school athletic program 16%
- Family Child Care 13%
- After School Extended day in child’s school 9%
- My child goes home after school 47%
- Other 13%

What is your level of satisfaction with the current after school program and/or activities that your children are participating in?
- Very unsatisfied 5%
- Satisfied 28%
- Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied 17%
- Satisfied 33%
- Very satisfied 17%
What Stood Out from the Presentations about State and National Approaches to Ensuring Quality After School Options?:

- Kids need choices in after school programs – their voices need to be heard
- The need to develop children as leaders
- The importance of developing networks of parents to serve as advocates and leaders. “They don’t have to stand up by themselves fighting the system.”
- The importance that parents and children have shared learning opportunities
- Having a common language about what “quality” means
- Programs should provide a variety of enrichment activities, including arts and STEM education. “We need to change the language around after school programs – more positive, enriching, etc.”
- Parents making sure that after school programs align with what they want for their children
- The number of children who are not engaged in after school programs

What do Parents Need After School Programs to Offer? (% of participants selected it as one of top 3 needs)

- Affordable programs (62%)
- Widespread and equal access to programs (55%)
- Transportation to after school programs (52%)
- More access to information about quality – how do you define it? Measure it? (40%)
- Programs that provide homework assistance (29%)
- Greater opportunity for parents to be involved and provide input about programs (24%)
- Information about & access for special needs (21%)

What are the Biggest Challenges to All Children Having Access to High Quality After School Programs and a Recommended Strategy to Solve the Challenges? (% of participants selected item as one of top 3 challenges)

- Cost: “How can parents pay?” (63%)
  Strategy: Grant funding
  Strategy: Subsidies for parents
- Transportation: getting there & back (58%)
  Strategy: Use school buses
- Lack of knowledge about different school programs’ quality (35%)
  Strategy: Create a quality assessment rating system to help parents choose
- Not all schools have after school programs (29%)
  Strategy: “Create a comprehensive list of after care programs and distribute to parents through the schools”
- Program providers’ lack of training in common core standards / education (27%)
- Finding after school programs for kids with special needs (23%)
- Nurturing partnerships for programs (23%)
  Strategy: “Ensure partnerships between school, community and program sites to make sure kids get to programs”
- Lack of clarity about which programs are regulated, with agency oversight (17%)

What’s Most Important re: Quality of After School Programs?

- Adapt licensing requirements to include providers that offer different types of programs
- Provide professional development to ensure trained and highly qualified staff
- Exposure to a variety of enrichment programs – including arts & physical activity
- Equal access to programs
- Provide education to parents about what their kids need to excel (ex. balance between academic & physical activity)

How closely aligned programmatically should after school programs be to the academic curriculum taught during the school day?

Themes

- Closely aligned, but not direct alignment – “more support, but not a rehash of what they’ve learned”
- Provide a “broad range of activities” to meet interest and needs of diverse youth
- Should extend learning, but must be fun and interesting
- Align through collaboration between providers and County resources (Parks & Planning, PGCPS, etc.)
- Include non-traditional teaching methods (ex. hands on learning, environmental stewardship) aligned with the curriculum

Poll

- Not at all 5%
- Moderately aligned 67%
- Fully aligned 28%

POLL: What are the 3 factors most important for you in choosing after school care?

- Cost (67%)
- Proximity to home, school, work (54%)
- Educational program that’s offered (54%)
- Environment of the center or place of care (46%)
- Hours of operation/part time care available (38%)
- Caregiver (13%)
- Nearby transportation (10%)
- Only provider or program with a vacancy (0%)
What are the most important partnerships to ensure access to high quality after school programs and why?

- Business community to partner with schools & parents (public-private & philanthropic sectors to address transportation, quality & technology challenges)
- After school program providers partner with schools to ensure student success
- Parents, after school program providers, and schools work together to share information
- State to partner with County to share information about available resources

Overarching why: These are the right players to address the key challenges we’ve already identified

What roles can you as a parent play to ensure access for your kids to high quality after school programs?

- Volunteer and get involved (i.e. carpooling)
- Learn about the school environment to understand its needs
- Advocate at your school
- Use the PTA to identify quality programs
- Research what programs are available for your child

What roles can parents play collectively to ensure access to quality after school programs for all kids?

- Advocate for a parent institute or organization
- Organize many parents in the PTA
- Work through a PTA to advocate with a unified voice to develop & improve quality programs
- Collaborate with other parents outside of a PTA for quality after school programs
- Advocate together for good policies
- Work together to understand the school community’s vision

What is your level of satisfaction with the program today?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very unsatisfied</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfied</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>46%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
<td>48%</td>
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THANKS to our Sponsors and Supporting Partners!!

Sponsors:
- Capital One
- Councilman Derrick Leon Davis
- The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region and its affiliate, the Community Foundation for Prince George’s County

Supporting Partners:
- Prince George’s County Social Innovation Fund/2 to 6 Initiative
- Prince George’s Child Resource Center
- Prince George’s County Public Schools
- Prince George’s County Department of Parks and Recreation (M-NCPPC)
- Prince George’s Chamber of Commerce
- Prince George’s County Parents and Teachers Association Council
- Maryland CAN
- AmericaSpeaks