

**ChapinHall** at the University of Chicago  
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**Enhancing Quality in  
Afterschool Programs  
Fifth-Year Report on a  
Process Evaluation of  
Prime Time Palm Beach  
County, Inc.**

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**2010**

**YOUTH  
DEVELOPMENT**

Enhancing Quality in  
Afterschool Programs

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**Recommended Citation**

Baker, S., Spielberger, J.,  
Lockaby, T., & Guterman, K.  
(2010). *Enhancing Quality  
in Afterschool Programs*.  
Chicago: Chapin Hall at the  
University of Chicago.

ISSN: 1097-3125

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## **Acknowledgments**

This report would not have been possible without the guidance and information we received from participants in and observers of Prime Time Palm Beach County, Inc., including representatives from Prime Time, the Children's Services Council, the School District of Palm Beach County, the United Way, Palm Beach Community College, and Family Central. They gave generously of their time, provided documents and access to meetings, and answered our frequent questions.

We owe special thanks to all of the program directors and staff at Prime Time who worked closely with us, providing access to information and helpful insights to enhance our understanding of program implementation issues. In addition to making it possible to participate in regular meetings by telephone, they also responded to requests for additional information throughout the year. Finally, we are very grateful to the enhancement providers and program directors who found time in their busy days to answer our questions.

We also wish to acknowledge the assistance of our colleagues at Chapin Hall: Leifa Mayers, who participated in data collection and analysis; Rosemary Gill, who assisted with data organization and editing; and Anne Clary, who assisted with the editing of this report. Last but not least, we thank Prime Time Palm Beach County, Inc. for supporting the evaluation.

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# Introduction

During the past two decades, the afterschool field has experienced tremendous growth. This growth reflects, in part, continuing concern about developmental and achievement gaps between low-income children and their more advantaged peers, coupled with a belief that afterschool activities can help to reduce these gaps. Opportunities to participate in constructive afterschool activities are still more limited in low-income communities than in more affluent communities, and questions remain about the effects of afterschool programs on children's development and academic achievement. At the same time, as the field has evolved and grown, practitioners and policymakers are learning that programs are more likely to have effects when they address multiple developmental domains, are of high quality and led by professional staff, and engage children on a regular and sustained basis. Improving quality remains challenging, however, as the field remains plagued by problems of unstable funding and staffing as well as difficulty developing realistic expectations and quality standards for a diverse array of providers. Intermediary organizations are a critical resource for bringing together diverse perspectives, advocating for and developing quality standards, and linking programs with needed supports and services, including professional development for staff, to meet those standards (e.g., Halpern, 2006; Halpern, Spielberger, & Robb, 2001; Johnson, Rothstein, & Gajdosik, 2004; Little, Wimer, & Weiss, 2008; Yohalem, Wilson-Ahlstrom, & Yu, 2005).

One such intermediary is Prime Time Palm Beach County, Inc., an organization dedicated to improving the availability and quality of afterschool programs in the county. Fueled by growing concern about the supply and quality of afterschool opportunities for children and youth in Palm Beach County, the foundation for Prime Time was laid with the creation of the Out-of-School Consortium by community stakeholders. This consortium created a coordinating council to share resources and enhance existing afterschool programs for elementary- and middle-school youth. Subsequently, over the course of several years, the coordinating council developed a framework for a new nonprofit intermediary called Prime Time, which officially began operation in 2001. By 2004, eight full-time staff were on board, and by 2005, the number of staff had doubled. With support from the Children's Services Council (CSC) of Palm Beach County, the Picower Foundation, and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Prime Time works with all key afterschool stakeholders, including CSC, the School District of Palm Beach County,

the Department of Parks and Recreation, the Palm Beach Health Department, Palm Beach Community College, and various municipalities.

At the beginning, Prime Time focused its work on providing opportunities for providers to network and increase participation in and develop the quality of selected programs serving elementary- and middle-school children in targeted low-income communities. However, in subsequent years, a broader and more long-term goal emerged, which was to create an integrated and sustainable system of quality standards, supports, and resources for all afterschool programs in the county. Within this system, Prime Time aims to tailor quality improvement efforts, technical assistance, and other supports to the needs of individual programs. It also seeks to increase community awareness of the value of afterschool programs and the importance of program quality. Toward these ends, its leadership has sought to position Prime Time as a countywide intermediary, as opposed to a funder or provider of services. Furthermore, in order to strengthen the system of supports for afterschool programs, Prime Time's goal is to develop capacity in local institutions to provide program enhancements and staff training to programs to improve their quality.

During the 2007-2008 program year, Prime Time implemented a county-wide Quality Improvement System (QIS) that included program standards, an assessment process, and on-site technical assistance delivered by quality advisors and peer coaches. Based on a two-year pilot project, the QIS is a multistep process that begins with baseline assessments by trained outside assessors on a standardized measure of program quality called the Palm Beach County Program Quality Assessment (PBC-PQA).<sup>1</sup> The PBC-PQA uses a 5-point rating scale to measure all aspects of program environments (i.e., physical, social, and personal), with particular focus on engaging youth and giving them a voice in their activities. The QIS process consists of several key steps. In addition to external assessments at the beginning of the process, other key steps include self-assessments by program staff, the development of program improvement plans based on assessments, the provision of on-site technical assistance by quality advisors, staff trainings and curricular resources to implement improvements, and reassessment by assessors from Family Central who have been trained by High/Scope to use the PBC-PQA. (See Appendix A for an overview of the QIS process.) The system also includes up-front monetary support.

To support the QIS, Prime Time either directly provides or facilitates connections to a variety of community resources. These include informal trainings and formal staff development opportunities, curricular and program enhancements, networking events, and outreach, advocacy, and marketing efforts. Prime Time initially assumed responsibility for providing professional development, program assessments, and program enhancements directly to providers during its early years. However, Prime Time now has established agreements with a number of community organizations to provide some or all

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<sup>1</sup> The PBC-PQA was developed by the High/Scope Foundation, an educational research foundation that also develops curricula, conducts training, and publishes educational materials, in collaboration with Prime Time and other stakeholders.



of these services. For example, Family Central now provides program quality assessments, and the Center for Creative Education (CCE), the YMCA of South Palm Beach County, and several other organizations provide program enhancements. Although Prime Time staff continue to provide informal training to afterschool staff and facilitate networking events, Palm Beach Community College is largely responsible for other, formal professional development opportunities.

During the past 5 years, Chapin Hall has been observing and documenting Prime Time's goals and strategies as they emerged both as individual activities and as part of a *system* of supports for afterschool programs serving children and youth, with a focus on the development of the QIS. This report covers the 2008-2009 program year, the second year of implementation of the QIS following a pilot period. Sixty-four providers across the county participated in the first year of the QIS, and 90 participated in the second year. They represented a broad range of program types, although there were three main categories of programs. These consisted of (1) community-based afterschool programs funded by CSC that were required to participate in the QIS as a condition of their funding; (2) middle-school programs, both community-based and school-based; and (3) afterschool programs at elementary schools in the School District of Palm Beach County. These programs also varied in terms of their experience with the QIS process.

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## **Focus and Research Questions for 2008-2009 Evaluation**

For the 2008-2009 program year, Prime Time asked Chapin Hall to focus evaluation activities on two areas, the enhancements and the QIS. The research questions for each area are described below.

### **Year 2 QIS**

We continued our observations of programs' experiences with the QIS, which was in its second year as a formal countywide system. Prime Time was particularly interested in understanding what happens over time in terms of providers' interest in quality improvement efforts. This question was especially pertinent in the 2008-2009 program year because of a transition that was beginning in how afterschool programs were funded. In the past, programs supported by CSC were funded based upon expectations that they would implement programs as described in individual proposals, but during 2008-2009, a transition was started to base funding on program attendance.<sup>2</sup> Thus, Prime Time staff were interested in knowing if providers would be more focused on maintaining or increasing program attendance than on maintaining or increasing program quality. We were also interested in knowing whether providers' attention to quality

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<sup>2</sup> This funding transition was implemented in stages throughout the year, so some programs transitioned sooner than others. As will be described in more detail in the next section of the report, the Continue-to-Care Afterschool program, the Early Learning Council, and Family Central administer funds provided by CSC to qualified families to use for children to attend any program with a rate agreement with Family Central, much as the child subsidy system operates for early childhood programs.

was different for different types of agencies or programs (e.g., school district versus community-based) and length of time in the QIS. By interviewing enhancement providers, we had the opportunity for the first time to add their perspectives on the quality of the afterschool programs to those of program directors.

### **Research Questions on the QIS**

- As programs continue to participate in the QIS for a second year, what changes occur in the focus of their quality improvement efforts and their participation in Prime Time supports (e.g., professional development, the enhancements, and networking opportunities)?<sup>3</sup> Are there differences depending on prior participation in the QIS (including its earlier pilot phase) or type of program?
- As CSC changes the way it funds afterschool programs, to what extent do these shifts in funding affect how afterschool programs in the QIS think about quality?

### **Enhancements**

Our primary focus in the evaluation was on evaluating the quality and professional development impacts of the enhancement units provided by 14 local organizations in Palm Beach County. As described in previous reports, during its first several years of operation, Prime Time took responsibility for managing the provision of extracurricular programs to afterschool programs. However, over time, Prime Time became increasingly committed to building capacity in local organizations. Thus, at the beginning of the 2007-2008 program year, Prime Time finalized contracts with CCE and the YMCA of South Palm Beach County as enhancement providers who would work directly with afterschool providers. Subsequently, Prime Time developed contracts with nine other local organizations to provide staff training and enhancements in the areas of inclusion, literacy, science, technology, money management, environmental education, and the performing arts. Since that time, Prime Time has gradually expanded the number of community organizations that provide enhancements. During the 2008-2009 program year, Prime Time had 15 contracts with 14 community organizations and professionals for enhancement units, which are described in Appendix B.

Along with expanding the number of enhancement providers in 2008-2009, Prime Time also changed expectations for enhancement providers and the afterschool programs using enhancements. While enhancements had technically been available to all programs in the county in previous years, Prime Time had always emphasized targeting programs serving lower-income communities. This year, Prime Time clearly stated to enhancement providers and interested programs that the provision of enhancements was to be restricted to programs that are funded by CSC or through a subsidy program at Family Central,

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<sup>3</sup> In this report we describe the popularity of different Prime Time offerings and experiences of program staff, but lack the administrative data necessary to conduct additional analyses.

programs located in Title I schools, and programs in selected low-income communities. Providers were required to report on their activities monthly, rather than quarterly, including the number of programs offered and participants served. Prime Time also established additional training requirements for enhancement staff. At a minimum, one member of the enhancement agency was required to complete the online training “Introduction to PBC-PQA,” to familiarize enhancement providers with afterschool programs’ standards and assessments; and at least one staff member was expected to complete “Supervising Advanced Youth Development Practices.” Finally, some of the enhancement providers were also asked to complete a self-assessment portion of agency certification for “Nonprofits First,” with the understanding that any future contract would require nonprofit certification.

### **Research Questions on Enhancements**

According to Prime Time staff, the purpose of the enhancements is twofold: to introduce children to a new field or skill and to develop skills in staff so that they can continue to provide similar activities to children in the future. Our research questions were intended to increase our understanding of both of these purposes:

- What are providers’ experiences with the enhancements? As community organizations have taken on more responsibility for delivering these services and as the range and number of enhancements has grown, do providers continue to view them positively?
- What is Prime Time doing to support enhancement providers to ensure that their work meets high quality standards?
- How is Prime Time communicating with and supporting enhancement providers in building a model of practice that fosters the development of skills in program staff? What is the philosophy and approach of the instructors (e.g., is it consistent with a train-the-trainer model)?
- How is Prime Time communicating with and supporting program staff to encourage their understanding and ability to acquire skills from the enhancement providers and their instructors? To what extent do program staff view the enhancements as opportunities for staff to become trained to provide similar enhancements to youth in the future? To what extent do they view the enhancements as occasions in which their primary role is to assist the instructor and manage any behavioral problems that arise with youth?

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## **Methods**

Our research methods for the 2008-2009 evaluation consisted of telephone interviews with several groups of key informants, participation via conference call in selected meetings, and review and analysis of available reports and documents. Most of the data for this report were collected between January and July 2009.

## **Key Informant Interviews**

Chapin Hall researchers conducted a total of 55 formal interviews by telephone with relevant informants during 2009 to assess their views of Prime Time, the QIS, and program enhancements. The interviewees included directors of community-based agencies providing enhancements to afterschool programs as well as directors of afterschool programs. In addition, we communicated regularly with individual Prime Time staff.

The interviews were semistructured. Key topics were covered with all respondents, and other topics were tailored to the position and background of the informant. (Copies of the interview guides for enhancement providers and program directors can be found in Appendix C.) Respondents were given the option of not having their interviews recorded. Most interviews were recorded, transcribed, and summarized, and then coded and analyzed with the assistance of the ATLAS.ti qualitative software.

We interviewed the 14 directors of the enhancement agencies identified by Prime Time and a sample of program directors representing both community-based agency programs and afterschool programs run by the School District of Palm Beach County. In addition to the enhancement providers, we were able to interview 42 afterschool program directors. This group was composed of program directors from 28 community-based programs and 14 school district programs.

We sought to interview program directors in the order in which they would be transitioned to receiving their funding based upon attendance. Because school district directors were in the last group to be transitioned by CSC, and in most cases had not experienced the transition, we randomly selected a small number to interview at the end of our data collection period. We also considered the level of engagement in the QIS as determined by Prime Time, and we targeted directors described by quality advisors as either “actively” or “somewhat/barely” engaged in the QIS and did not recruit staff from the very few programs described as not engaged at all in the QIS. Our sample, therefore, gives marginal preference to individuals with more experience in the subjects of interest over individuals who were less involved.

Program directors varied in their education and professional backgrounds in the afterschool field. As a group, however, they had considerable experience working with children either as teachers or as staff in early-childhood or afterschool programs, and some had extensive experience as administrators. Their educational backgrounds varied and included elementary education, business administration, health education, social work, public administration, medicine, and recreation. In a few cases, staff had started with their programs in other positions and moved on to their positions as program directors. The directors also varied in the length of time they had been involved with Prime Time. Though only seven programs in our sample were participating in the QIS for the first time this year, a total of 11 directors were new to the QIS this year because 4 directors were new to their programs. Eighteen were directors of programs in their second year of participation in the QIS, and 13 were directors of programs that had also participated in the QIS pilot during the 2006-2007 program year.

### **Meeting Observations**

One or two Chapin Hall staff also participated by telephone in approximately two meetings per month facilitated by Prime Time. These included most of the biweekly meetings of quality advisors as well as other meetings with the director of quality improvement at Prime Time. One staff member also participated in most of the weekly enhancement evaluation core team meetings that began convening in July 2009.

### **Analysis of Secondary Data**

We analyzed selected content from Prime Time documents relevant to the implementation of the QIS and Prime Time's enhancements. These included existing descriptions and reports of Prime Time's work, the QIS, meeting minutes, and contracts with enhancement providers. We also had access to selected data from enhancement providers' records of their activities and the number of programs they served.

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# The QIS: Year 2

In this section, we briefly summarize findings related to key elements of the QIS—the assessment process and the support provided by quality advisors—and then discuss findings related to the potential impact of a transition in program funding on quality. We also describe providers’ general experiences with and perspectives on training and other Prime Time supports for quality. For more detailed information about the QIS, please refer to previous evaluation reports (Spielberger & Lockaby 2007; Spielberger, Lockaby, Mayers & Guterman, 2009).

The goal of the QIS is to engage program directors in a process to make quality an ongoing priority. Thus, one key challenge for Prime Time is to provide services that encourage specific changes in program quality while supporting movement toward self-sustaining quality practices. Significant barriers can exist in working toward this objective. Implementing high-quality program practices can be harder when key supports to program quality are compromised by inadequate funding, poorly qualified staff with high rates of turnover, and inappropriate physical space. Organizations with low initial levels of quality can find it difficult to engage quality improvement as a goal when simply operating a program feels sufficiently challenging.

Complicating Prime Time’s efforts to elevate the place of quality is the concept itself. Quality is experienced in different ways by different stakeholders, and quality may mean one thing to parents or children, a different thing to staff, and something else to Prime Time. Not only may the meaning of quality differ, but its importance likely varies among stakeholders, as each is drawn by different interests and objectives. Program quality is associated with better outcomes for participants, for example, but is not always supported by a clear understanding about how to achieve it, the benefits to the organizations that make it a priority, or the necessary financial and other resources. For Prime Time to successfully implement its quality objectives, it must therefore successfully negotiate the interests and objectives of diverse stakeholders as it seeks to initiate and sustain a defined program of quality improvement. The extent to which Prime Time achieves this depends upon how well it can cultivate an attractive and pragmatic set of quality initiatives that generates buy-in at multiple levels.

The QIS consists of key points during which Prime Time is in a position to engage afterschool programs and generate buy-in, as well as engage program staff in a dialogue about the wisdom,

practicality, and benefits of the services offered and the value of having programs that are focused on ubiquitous and ongoing quality improvement. Below we briefly describe how program directors experienced the QIS this past year, focusing on the assessment process and technical assistance provided by quality advisors.

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## **The Assessment Process**

As described in the introduction, the QIS begins with baseline assessments by trained outside assessors from Family Central on the PBC-PQA, a standardized measure of program quality. Following these external assessments, program staff conduct their own assessments, develop program improvement plans based on both assessments and feedback from quality advisors, and work to implement program improvement plans before being reassessed by representatives from Family Central.

An important part of the assessment process is the tool used to assess programs, and most directors said again this year that the PBC-PQA tool fit their operations well, covering nearly every aspect of their programs. It assessed what they said they were striving to achieve and let them know what was important for improving quality. Most school district and Boys and Girls Club directors said that they also benefited from the QIS assessment process, but a few said that they were less able to be as responsive to the QIS assessment process as other programs because they were required to participate in other assessment processes particular to their programs. These required processes must take higher priority than the QIS assessment, in their perception, because those assessments are attached to funding sources and the QIS assessment is not a requirement of their programs.

Overall, program directors identified few concerns with the assessment process this year. Those directors who had been through assessment processes in previous years reported that their staff were more comfortable being observed and scored by outside assessors than in years past. Additionally, directors described being more accepting of the assessment scores report. This acceptance is at least partially a function of ongoing participation in the QIS, as some directors expressed confidence that repeated assessments over time yield a more accurate picture of their program's level of functioning. Having been through the assessment process at least once before and knowing that multiple assessments are better measures of underlying quality seemed to make the assessment process easier.

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## **Technical Assistance Provided by Quality Advisors**

Nearly all program directors expressed high regard for their quality advisors again this year and especially appreciated their willingness to travel to program sites and work directly with both the director and staff. In this fifth year of the QIS process, many directors say they know their quality advisors well and have an increased understanding of their strengths and capabilities. Some

quality advisors, however, are described as offering more hands-on work with directors than others. Some directors articulated a perception of inequity, feeling that their quality advisors spent less time at their sites, or were less available, than quality advisors for other directors. For at least one director, meeting with the quality advisor reportedly required a month's advance notice, which did not feel responsive.

Our research cannot confirm these perceptions or specify how these perceived or real gaps actually affected the quality of programs. But a few directors remarked that quality advisors seem to have too many responsibilities and are spread too thin. This was true as they considered the past year and as they looked toward next year, which some viewed as challenging because of economic circumstances and a transition in funding (which we discuss in more detail later). Program directors' experiences with their quality advisors and their concern when they are not available both suggest that advisors are valued as supporters of program quality, and that it may be helpful to understand more about specific unmet needs among programs in the coming year and ways to respond to these needs or interests.

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## **Connections between the QIS and Quality**

High-quality programs can be the result of many internal and external influences, but the program directors we spoke with consistently identified the QIS as a major driver of quality improvement. A large proportion of directors attributed one-half or more of their overall improvement in quality directly to participation in the QIS, and a few claimed QIS involvement explained all of their improvement. Moreover, as programs continued to work with the QIS, they experienced additional quality gains, both as captured by the PBC-PQA (Smith, 2009; Smith, Akiva, Blazeovski, & Pelle, 2008) and noted in the program directors' perceptions.

In addition to the contributions of the QIS, program staff identified other factors and circumstances that affect quality. These included support from their executive director or principal in making programmatic decisions, high standards of the director, alternate assessment tools, internal (non-Prime Time) professional development opportunities for staff, well-qualified and trained staff, and luck in being able to identify and hire good staff who are motivated to stay with the program.

These other factors also contributed to the capacity of programs to pay attention to quality and support the QIS process. Thus, they are potential areas that Prime Time might address going forward. One particularly promising opportunity may be available for helping programs with the recruitment and hiring of staff, which we also discuss in greater detail below.



## **Awareness of Quality and Integration of Quality Improvement Efforts over Time**

Higher levels of satisfaction, increased levels of program quality, and a decline in concerns about the QIS standards and assessment process appear to be at least partially the result of structural and attitudinal adjustments made by participating organizations and programs to conform with the QIS processes and expectations. Some program directors described how the QIS has contributed to establishing practices and reallocating resources that make quality a sustained focus in their organization (e.g., adding a dedicated quality coordinator). A few directors described how the QIS has become a regular part of providing programming; this happens because Prime Time works with them consistently and not—as one director characterized other quality efforts—by saying, “You need to raise the level of your quality. Good luck! We’ll see you in a year!” Rather than thinking of quality separately from their operations, some programs described being accustomed to considering the QIS, and therefore quality, in many or all aspects of their programming. The message from the QIS received by program directors is that, as one director described it, “everyone should be doing this,” and not just some parts of the organization or staff.

Directors described how participation in the QIS has forced them to consider quality in new ways, and how quality fits in a deeper way with the services they provide. Participation in the QIS made directors, according to one, “more aware of their surroundings” and more intentional in their efforts to provide quality across multiple levels of programming. In this respect, the QIS may have had its greatest impact by engaging program directors in a continual conceptualization of quality improvement, thus refocusing more of directors’ efforts through a lens of quality. As a result, the QIS is experienced differently for many program directors now compared with when it was initiated.

The elements of the feedback loop for the QIS participants were described by many program directors. As directors received their program’s assessment scores, they perceived having a more objective and accessible view of their program’s strengths and weaknesses. With the help of their quality advisors and the creation and implementation of their program improvement plans, directors were able to direct greater attention to weaknesses while they monitored and trained staff. As they made adjustments to areas of weakness, these efforts were often captured by the next assessment, allowing the director to gain a more comprehensive view of the program’s strengths and weaknesses. This is, we understand, how the QIS is intended to operate, and it is a mark of QIS’s place in programs that so many program directors were able to describe it in this way.

## **Overcoming Barriers to Quality**

Still, some barriers to full and effective participation in the QIS continue to exist. In addition to challenges in implementing the QIS in parallel with other quality improvement efforts (noted earlier), the key barrier mentioned by program directors was that time constrains them from keeping up with the requirements of participation while running their programs. Additionally,

programs that use differing program models or different assessment tools for assessing quality may continue to find it difficult to engage in the QIS without greater support from higher managerial levels. Program directors who volunteered opinions about why other directors do not fully engage in the QIS identified distrust, lack of motivation to change, and poor experiences with earlier quality improvement efforts as possible reasons. And, as we have noted elsewhere, it is more difficult in general for programs to deeply engage in the QIS in their first year of participation.

As helpful as the QIS was overall in elevating the profile of quality, in the course of attempts to achieve deep and lasting quality improvement, many directors said that the QIS could only get them so far before they hit a quality plateau, short of their goals. Many program directors pointed to the quality of staff they are able to hire as a key barrier to further advancing quality. Several other directors said they, too, had felt stuck in a similar situation until they improved their standards and recruiting methods to find more highly qualified staff, allowing them to push through previous plateaus.<sup>4</sup>

One question that arises from this finding is whether Prime Time might help programs attract a more qualified applicant pool and be more effective in their hiring processes. It is not clear whether quality advisors are appropriate for providing expertise in this area, but they may be useful in engaging programs in an initial discussion about hiring approaches and practices. Training might be helpful for directors to identify pools of potential staff and guidance on hiring. And there may be ways to more specifically consider quality improvement goals when reviewing the qualifications of potential staff in hiring decisions.<sup>5</sup>

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## **The Funding Transition and Potential Effects on Program Quality**

Many afterschool programs in Palm Beach County are currently undergoing a transition in how they are funded. The goals of the transition are to save money and to disperse the money more evenly. The hope is to serve more kids under the new system, working kids off the waiting list for subsidies. Instead of funding programs directly and monitoring individual contracts with afterschool organizations, CSC has contracted with Family Central to reimburse afterschool programs based upon program attendance. This transition created a new category of funding called Continue to Care Afterschool (CTCA). Families below specific income thresholds are eligible for CTCA funds, which are paid monthly to programs where the eligible children are

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<sup>4</sup> Other directors reported that the economic downturn had resulted in better candidates and did not attribute the presence of better staff to changes in recruiting and hiring practices.

<sup>5</sup> Although program directors were referring to the hiring of front-line staff in describing this challenge, a related question is what supports Prime Time might provide for the process of hiring and training of program directors.

enrolled and do not have more than three absences per month. During the past year, afterschool programs funded through CSC have gradually been transitioning to this new funding process.

Prime Time staff remained optimistic that this change in funding would not cause programs to decrease their attention to quality, while recognizing the potential for that to happen. Previously, the amount of funding provided in contracts with organizations was not strictly connected to per capita enrollment, so some organizations were funded more generously per child than others. As a result, though the amount of overall funding did not decrease last year (and the average money available therefore remained constant), some programs were in a position to receive less money if their enrollment was constant, while others would receive more.

Because of the timing of the funding rollout and data collection, most program directors were able to say little about the actual effects of the funding transition. Several program directors anticipated receiving less money, however, and identified fears about potential staff layoffs, turnover, and decreased access to programmatic resources, each of which they believed could lower program quality. One director, whose afterschool program is housed within a larger organization that runs many programs, discussed worries that with the new flat funding there is no longer a way to make sure the money is being spent directly on the afterschool program. Three directors specifically expected a negative effect on quality as a result of the funding transition because they assumed funds would be lower. As one director explained, “If I lose a kid, I’m going to have to lose a few staff.” One director also identified a potential feedback loop where, as parts of a program that are attractive to youth are cut (e.g., field trips), attendance drops and revenue decreases. Of special concern were programs in more geographically isolated parts of the county and programs serving undocumented migrant workers who would not be able to prove eligibility under the new system.

Program directors of the first programs to undergo the funding transition (i.e., in September 2008) were able to talk about some of the actual effects thus far. Many directors said that they had experienced very few changes as a result of the transition and were optimistic that their overall operations and attention to program quality would not be affected. Other directors talked about specific negative effects they have experienced. One program director raised a concern that potential program participants who would like their children to attend the program would be deterred by the requirement to go to West Palm Beach to interview with Family Central in order to get on the waiting list. One director of a community-based site said that it has been difficult to get parents and caregivers to sign the kids in and out, as expected for reimbursement. Kids who attend this program have historically walked home because the program site is located close to their homes. In addition, parents often don’t get home from work before the afterschool program closes at 6 p.m. A director who was very worried about both how the transition has affected the director’s program thus far and the possible changes to come, summed up concerns this way:

They’re handling all of the afterschool programs the same, and not all afterschool programs are the same. We serve different communities and there’s different

needs. Different things need to be done and they're just putting everybody in one box, and some of them might be better for some programs, but we've suffered because we have had 33-percent budget cuts because they are expecting the parents to pay a certain amount of money, and there's no way our parents can afford it.

Although many program directors expressed anxiety about the early transition process, they were equally or more uncertain about the long-term result. During the transition year, there were provisions to allow grandfathering of prior participants without meeting the new eligibility rules. As these grandfathered participants graduate from the programs (or leave for other reasons) and as families realize that they are free to move among programs, it is possible that the new system will operate more like the free market upon which it is modeled, with some winners and losers.

The funding transition started during a year with its own economic challenges, and directors expressed more general concerns about changes in funding. Among the 42 directors we spoke with, more than one-third anticipated budget cuts for the following year; only 2 expected budget increases. Two directors predicted that some programs will be forced to close their doors. Interestingly, a number of directors expressed confidence that funding does not affect the quality of their programs or that they will maintain quality regardless of their funding situation. These program directors were able to describe a range of specific things they would cut (e.g., field trips, activities, snacks, electrical costs) or fees that they would increase before they would let any funding decreases affect "quality." This particular view is consistent with the one offered by Prime Time staff, who sought to direct attention, on balance, to the importance of a high-quality interpersonal relationship between staff and participants and the use of effective delivery strategies rather than to particular materials or program content. Because many directors are experiencing a smooth transition thus far and many directors experiencing problems report that CSC and Family Central staff have been responsive, helpful, and flexible, there may be reason to believe that, over time, the new system could work reasonably well for most programs. While it is too early to tell whether or how the transition process will ultimately affect program quality, Prime Time would be well-served to continue to observe the effects of the transition, talking frequently with program directors and other stakeholders about their experiences and concerns. It seems likely that support from Prime Time in budgeting and program planning, for example, would continue to be helpful in the coming years.

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## **Perspectives on Prime Time's Other Supports for Quality**

In addition to the particular elements of the QIS, program directors participated in and continued to express high levels of satisfaction with a range of Prime Time's supports and services, which included informal and formal training, program enhancements, and networking opportunities. Indeed, most were very satisfied with all of Prime Time's services, and none described themselves, overall, as being dissatisfied. Consistent with overall experiences with the QIS over

time, a few directors said they have been increasingly impressed with Prime Time. Several directors were especially appreciative of Prime Time's requests for feedback, describing Prime Time as being very responsive to their requests and needs.

Although directors expressed appreciation for all of Prime Time's activities and services, they highlighted different activities and reported using them to different degrees. Program directors, on the whole, appreciated both the general "all you can eat" and "buffet" approaches of these service offerings. Several said they participated in "everything" that Prime Time offers and that they take advantage of nearly every offering of every service. Others said that they accessed a little of everything, or that they participated in most of the offerings. Some more consistently attend certain kinds of events (e.g., all networking or all training events), and some who attended one kind of offering were unfamiliar with what else was available.

Overall, program directors described themselves as being frequently involved in trainings, and considerably less involved with networking events, enhancements, staff scholarships, peer coaching, and, at the lowest end of involvement, the lending library. Several directors remarked that trainings were particularly good or useful, including one who claimed the biggest positive impact on the program resulted from trainings. One program director mentioned that trainings are especially useful for dealing with turnover by giving opportunities to new staff. A small number of directors expressed concerns about the quality of trainings but were not specific in their comments.

As in previous years, some program directors reported barriers related to time and staffing that limited their use of these supports and services, particularly their ability to participate in training and, occasionally, networking events. These directors identified the following as the primary barriers to attending: (1) lost wages for staff (because many programs cannot afford to pay staff to attend trainings, staff choose not to attend); (2) time spent away from program responsibilities (directors cannot afford the absence of staff during working hours); and (3) trainings being held too far away. In addition, as mentioned earlier, a few programs also found it challenging to participate in both the QIS and other assessment processes used by their agencies.

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## Summary

High-quality programs can be the result of many internal and external influences, but the program directors we spoke with consistently identified the QIS as a major driver of quality improvement. Compared with previous years, program directors identified few concerns with the assessment process this year. Those directors who had been through assessment processes in previous years reported that their staff were more comfortable being observed and scored by outside assessors and more accepting of the assessment scores report. Directors expressed confidence that repeated assessments over time yielded a more accurate picture of their program's level of functioning.

An important part of the QIS assessment process is the PBC-PQA, used to assess programs, and most directors said again this year that this tool was comprehensive and relevant to their program. Most school district and Boys and Girls Club directors said that they also benefited from the QIS assessment process, but a few said that they were less able to be responsive because other existing internal assessments are attached to funding sources.

In terms of support for the QIS, nearly all program directors expressed high regard for their quality advisors again this year. Program directors' experiences with their quality advisors and their concern when they were not available suggest that advisors were important to program quality and that it may be helpful to understand more about unmet needs or interests.

Satisfaction with QIS, increases in program quality, and lower concerns about QIS among program directors appear connected to attitudinal and structural changes in providers. QIS leads directors to be more intentional in working toward quality across multiple levels of programming, and in some toward a conceptualization of continuous quality improvement.

Some barriers to full and effective participation in the QIS continue to exist, primarily time constraints. A number of directors said that the QIS could only get them so far before they hit a quality plateau; other directors described being able to move beyond this plateau by rethinking their staff recruitment and hiring processes.

With respect to the impact of the funding transition on quality, during this past year, program directors were in a better position to articulate their concerns than to identify specific current impacts. Programs that anticipate receiving less money as a result of the funding transition identified fears about potential staff layoffs, turnover, and decreased access to programmatic resources, each of which could lower program quality. Of special concern were programs in more geographically isolated parts of the county and programs serving undocumented migrant workers who would not be able to prove eligibility under the new system. At the same time, although many program directors expressed anxiety about the transition process at this early stage, they were even more uncertain about the long-term result. Others believed that they could maintain quality by cutting back in what they perceived to be nonessential areas. The transition has raised specific concerns among some about potential effects on quality, though many we spoke to this year did not yet have direct experiences with the transition.

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# The Enhancement Process

Prime Time has in recent years changed how it provides opportunities for programs to incorporate outside providers in program offerings, expanded the number and range of providers, and changed expectations about their purpose. During the 2008-2009 program year, 14 community-based organizations provided a wide range of extra resources to 134 afterschool programs. Several local organizations, including the Center for Creative Education (CCE) and the YMCA of South Palm Beach County, provide these resources (see detailed descriptions of each organization and their offerings in Appendix B). During the 2008-2009 program year, providers could choose from 159 different activities for youth. In addition, there were 26 trainings that were available for afterschool program staff.

Enhancement activities for youth vary in topic, format, and duration. They generally are designed to be incorporated into the regular afterschool program schedule and be delivered by both the regular afterschool staff and experts provided by the community organization. Specific activities have included music, theater, dance, visual arts, entrepreneurship and business skills, and computer design technology. The purpose of the enhancements has primarily been to introduce children to new fields or skills, providing them with opportunities they would not otherwise get, but enhancements are also thought of as an opportunity to develop skills in program staff. Since contract changes with Prime Time beginning in September 2008, eligibility for receiving enhancements has shifted so that programs must be funded by CSC (now through Family Central), be located in Title I public schools, or operating in selected low-income communities in order to receive enhancements at no cost. To understand the enhancement process and the extent to which it met the expectations of both enhancement providers and program directors, we interviewed all 14 enhancement providers in addition to 42 program directors. We begin by providing an overview of the use of enhancements by programs participating in the QIS and by describing the relationship between enhancement providers and afterschool programs and then turn to Prime Time's role in shaping and supporting this relationship.

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## Overview of Enhancement Use

Fourteen enhancement providers completed almost 1,800 enhancements with almost 42,000 children at 134 different sites in 2008-2009, and about half of these units were in programs participating in the QIS (see Table 1). Enhancements were also used by a larger proportion of QIS participants last year, rising from 50 percent of QIS participants in 2007-2008 to 72 percent. Almost all the QIS sites that did *not* use enhancements in 2008-2009 were school-district programs, though some school-district programs used very high numbers of them. Because of changes in eligibility for enhancements for the most recent year, interpreting these changes is not straightforward. But these use patterns may reflect higher availability of enhancements in general, restrictions on what types of programs could receive enhancement units at no cost, or increased awareness of these resources.

The total number of enhancement units used during the past year by individual programs varied widely, from a low of 1 to a high of 53. Larger programs tended to use more enhancements, as did some Beacon Centers and some school-district afterschool programs. Overall, the average number of enhancements per program increased among both the QIS and non-QIS programs over the previous year, rising from 4 and 3 per program, respectively, to more than three times as many in the most recent year. As shown in Table 1, during the 2008-2009 program year, the average per program was more than 15 for the QIS sites and close to 12 for the non-QIS sites.

**Table 1. Number of Enhancement Units by QIS and Non-QIS Programs 2008-2009**

Program Type	Programs	Total Number of Enhancements	Mean Number per Programs
QIS ( $N = 90$ )	62	946	15.3
Non-QIS	72	827	11.5
TOTAL	134	1763	13.2

Enhancement providers differed in their capacity to provide enhancements as well as in the types of programming they could provide. Table 2 shows the number of programs served by each enhancement provider as well as the number of youth and adult participants.



**Table 2. Summary of Monthly Enhancement Reports 2008-2009<sup>a</sup>**

<b>Enhancement Provider</b>	<b>Number of Providers Served</b>	<b>Number of Youth Served</b>	<b>Number of Adults Served</b>
Accellearn (Technology Workshop)	20	807	
The ARC of Palm Beach County	22	61	385
Center for Creative Education	76	11,522	183
Junior Achievement	50	443	130
Kravis Center for the Performing Arts	27	1,152 + 473 youth and family participants	49
PBC Literacy Coalition	31		282
Pine Jog Environmental Education Center	17	618	
SF Science Museum	17	437	
YMCA	53	6,981	49
PBCC Youth Programs	3	99	
PB Zoo	13	990	
Lake Worth Playhouse	4	73	
CHAMPS (School District of Palm Beach County)	48	3,092	249
Chit Chat Times (School District of Palm Beach County)	11	131	12
Youth Speak Out International	8	60	n/a

<sup>a</sup> Based on information from Prime Time. There were 14 enhancement providers but 15 contracts; 1 provider was responsible for 2 contracts with Prime Time. The numbers in the table present unduplicated counts of providers who used enhancements, although some providers used enhancements more than once during the program year. However, we do not have the names of youth or adults who participated in these activities, so numbers of unique youth and adults served are likely to be lower.

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## **Initial Service Delivery Decisions and the Request Process**

Afterschool programs learn about enhancements from many sources. They may first learn about them in their work with their quality advisor or at Prime Time's monthly networking events, which enhancement providers are contractually required to attend. Those networking meetings increase their interactions with program staff and allow them to get an initial sense of their preferences, needs, and challenges.

A primary venue in which enhancement directors market their services to program directors and staff is the annual enhancement fair. There, program directors indicate interest in the different enhancement offerings, after which a meeting may be scheduled before a formal agreement is reached. Additionally, the process for requesting enhancements is now fully accessible online, and nearly all who used enhancements said that the online request form was easy to access and preferable to other methods. Although not all program directors said they had tried to obtain enhancements—in some cases because they had been unsuccessful in the past in getting the enhancements they wanted—most program directors who asked for them during the past year described the formal request process for enhancements as simple and easy.

Although some enhancement providers expressed interest in marketing their services to programs through Prime Time's newsletters or other communications, most enhancement providers appear to be near or at the capacity of what their contracts with Prime Time allow. As a result, most providers appeared to be using waitlists or other ways of regulating demand for their services. Many enhancement providers said they would like their Prime Time funding to be expanded so that they can increase their offerings to programs, both to serve more children and increase their own revenue. This corresponds to what many program directors report, including those who have chosen not to request enhancements recently. They have encountered limits to requesting enhancements, either because they believe there is a hard limit on how many they can receive, or because they requested an enhancement after all available slots were taken by other programs.

Program directors, for their part, identified multiple factors that figure into their decisions about which enhancements to request. Some directors said that they formally ask program youth what they would like, and some ask their staff about their preferences, so that directors are able to take advantage of individual staff talents or enthusiasm. Others rely more heavily upon their informal observations and conversations to help identify what children would enjoy, what experiences would be new for them, and what enhancements would most easily fit into their programming schedule.

Generally, enhancement providers were able to articulate how the enhancements fit into Prime Time's goal of professional, programmatic, and organizational development more clearly than program directors. In reflecting on what they saw as the proper place of enhancements, some enhancement providers expressed frustration at what they perceive to be a myopic view among program directors about how to use enhancements. Specifically, they expressed an interest in

having programs think about how to more deeply integrate enhancements with programmatic planning and professional development, as well as fit better with their participants' needs. One concern, voiced multiple times by enhancement providers, is that some programs seem to be choosing enhancements primarily to fill scheduling gaps and to have someone else take the primary responsibility for engaging the children.

Most program directors using enhancements with whom we spoke said that they received more than half of the specific enhancements they requested. The proportion of good matches appears to depend upon choices and characteristics of both providers and programs. Several directors who were successful in getting the enhancement they requested attributed their success to being organized; programs that fail to submit requests prior to deadlines or that regularly submit requests later than others were less likely to receive those enhancements. Because programs that are not well organized or planful about how to use enhancements may be further disadvantaged in being able to provide consistent and high-quality programming, the existing process for matching enhancement providers and programs may increase disparities among programs. Some are in a good position to take advantage of enhancements as an integrated part of their programs, and others are not able to incorporate enhancement offerings well, if at all.

### **Establishing and Building Relationships**

Many enhancement directors describe engaging programs as a long-term process that includes in-person meetings with directors, staff, and sometimes youth participants before the first day of the enhancement offering. Some said they use these meetings to gauge interest on the part of the program as a whole, as well as to gauge the potential for follow-through and commitment to the process. Enhancement providers also sometimes use this engagement period to communicate their expectations up front, as well as their basic requirements for space, materials, or other supports. Because the supply of enhancements is lower than demand for them, enhancement providers have some leeway in deciding which programs to engage. Overall, enhancement providers prefer programs that have demonstrated stability and, in particular, programs that are able to consistently follow through and meet expectations.

Enhancement providers' up-front expectations seem to vary considerably. Many have needs specific to their type of enhancement offering, as well as specific expectations about the role of afterschool program staff and the process for addressing any problems that arise. Other enhancement providers seem to be less specific or directive. Enhancement providers' experiences with afterschool providers have revealed some common pitfalls, and providers may convey their expectations to avoid the recurrence of past problems. In any case, enhancement providers reported that some problems persist and prove frustrating.

One important issue concerns the role of staff during the delivery of the enhancement. Prime Time has basic expectations it communicated to enhancement providers and program directors regarding program staff's role during an enhancement session. Nearly universally, both

enhancement providers and program directors reported that program staff are to be present in the room during enhancements and are to assist the instructor in various ways, such as monitoring the children's behavior. However, beyond this basic shared understanding, Prime Time's prescribed role for program staff is perceived to be much less clearly defined. Program directors were not consistent in describing enhancements as opportunities for their staff to participate or learn the material so as to be able to continue the enhancement after the instructor leaves.

Enhancement providers reported that although program staff are nearly always physically present in the room during an entire enhancement session, they are not always attending to the enhancement. For example, some staff were at times reportedly talking on their cell phones or with other staff, or attending to paperwork. One enhancement provider pointed out that if program staff are not engaged with the enhancement process, children may mimic this behavior, lessening the success of the enhancement. By contrast, when staff are engaged as full participants, children will be more likely to engage on a deeper level. Having staff thus engaged makes them more helpful to the enhancement provider—even if only as a good role model—and more likely to learn the material for later.

Prime Time has recently and more explicitly set out expectations that enhancements should also serve as a form of professional development for staff who can then continue enhancements in some form. As noted above, both program directors and enhancement providers shared a partial or incomplete understanding of this goal. When asked specifically if learning how to extend or continue the experience of the enhancements is part of program staff's role, about one-half agreed. Half again of that group had actually tried to use what they learned in programs, and only a few reported they had successfully accomplished this. In considering whether to try to continue some form of the enhancement experience in later programming, directors factored in such things as how much participants enjoyed the enhancement, how much the enhancement captured staff's attention and interests, and staff's ability to deliver similar content or expand on it.

Project directors said they first heard about the expectation to continue teaching enhancement content in some form from different sources, including the enhancement provider or from others at networking events. Only two directors recalled hearing directly from Prime Time that continuing the enhancement experience beyond the enhancement session was expected. Other directors reported they had not been specifically told this at all but came up with the idea on their own or assumed it was part of the process. Four other directors reported that they did not believe staff could extend the enhancement (and one went so far as to say that such a process was "impossible"). Reasons range from lack of equipment to lack of staff skills. One director put it this way:

We try to have our staff participating in there and trying to, you know, to observe what they can. But the truth is that, you know, if we could do it, we would. I mean, not everybody can draw.

Another said: “Most of the enhancements require equipment, tools, or supplies that we don’t have. This is true for the majority of the enhancements we’ve received.”

At the same time, some program directors mentioned that their staff had been able to pick up skills other than the content of the enhancement, including the way that instructors engage children. This kind of knowledge transfer was especially valued by one program director:

Having as many enhancements here, and the people who come in and do the enhancements, has really bumped up the performance of my counselors, because they were seeing it that they needed to train the enhancement people, and I see it the other way around. Those enhancement people come in, and they are such a cut above. They are so professional that, you know and I tell my staff that. Watch what [the instructor]’s doing, and you can steal any of her techniques that you think will work for you. And that’s my little speech to everybody, and that’s exactly what’s happened.

Enhancement providers held differing views about what program staff should or could be learning during enhancements and what they should be expected to do when the enhancement session ends. Five said that continuing the enhancement experience in some form is possible. A couple providers said that their expectations that the enhancement experience would be continued in some form was established up front, and another couple of providers expected the same but may not have communicated it directly to programs. Three enhancement providers characterized their particular enhancements as impossible or not expected to be sustained in their current form by program staff. For example, one enhancement director explained that the enhancement they provided was too technologically oriented for current program staff to be able to replicate it in any form without specific training and that “if Prime Time expects program staff to take on this role, Prime Time must formalize the process.”

Taken as a whole, these views suggest that what is expected to remain after an enhancement provider leaves depends critically upon several factors. These include how engaged program staff are during the enhancement, program directors’ standards for what continuation would look like, and their creativity in determining what, exactly, can be carried over—rather than assuming a literal transfer of knowledge, materials, and teaching capabilities to local program staff. Given the lack of clarity about this expectation, especially among program directors, it is not clear that the assumptions we heard about Prime Time’s expectations are accurate. In any case, it will be important for Prime Time, program directors, and enhancement providers to negotiate expectations up front that properly consider the objective of carrying over the enhancement in the context of available program staff time and capacity. (This is something that Prime Time became increasingly aware of during the 2008-2009 year and is reportedly planning to address.)

## **Enhancement Instruction Implementation**

### **Point-of-Service Delivery**

Program directors continue to hold very high opinions of enhancement providers and instructors. Many directors noted that Prime Time's provision of the enhancements saves them money by providing additional educational components to them at no cost. Others mentioned that if Prime Time did not provide the enhancements, they would not be able to bring such enhancements to their program. Many directors also mentioned that the children greatly enjoy the enhancements. As in previous years, program directors were especially appreciative of how the enhancement instructors deliver new experiences and learning opportunities directly to the children.

Program directors identified several characteristics of what they considered high-quality enhancements. Many directors noted a level of energy and enthusiasm that instructors bring to the session that elicits enthusiasm and interaction from children. Many program directors based their assessment upon how the children talk about them and request them: "The kids thoroughly enjoyed them. If my kids are very emphatic about something, then I'm happy." High-quality enhancements were evident to children and program directors when, for example, children gravitated toward the instructors, or were on their best behavior because they enjoyed the experience. Other important characteristics that defined a quality enhancement for directors included core professional behavior such as being on time and time-conscious, as well as an ability to be flexible and adapt to differing child interests.

Overall, program directors gave high ratings to enhancement instructors. The majority of directors said the quality of instruction was always or mostly good, and only a few said they have encountered some problems with the quality of instruction (although these directors were vague about what these problems were). At the same time, what constitutes a high-quality enhancement has, thus far, been up to program directors to define individually. Prime Time is interested in making sure these enhancements both are *of* high quality and contribute *to* longer-term quality, but the concept of quality in this area remains largely undefined.

Program directors also generally felt that their enhancement experience has been getting better over time (including the request process, interactions with provider agencies, and service delivery). When directors encountered problems with enhancements or perceived the quality of instruction to be low, they usually resolved these issues by informing the provider as well as Prime Time, as discussed further below.

On the other hand, some enhancement providers seemed uninformed or skeptical about the expectation that enhancements could be taught and continued in some form. Some enhancement providers were not aware that developing skills in staff is expected by Prime Time. Another enhancement provider, worried about having to overcome the presence of specific program staff in the room who were not engaged, preferred to work directly with children. Elaborating and underscoring expectations about enhancement providers' roles in increasing the program quality

at the host site will be necessary if this relationship is to be more effective in fulfilling all of its intended purposes.

### **Follow-Up after the Enhancement Ends**

Follow-up after an enhancement varies, at times in relation to the structure and purpose of the enhancement. Some enhancement providers train staff, rather than work directly with children. These enhancement providers reported that they follow up to observe staff and assess the implementation process of their protocols. However, for most enhancements, the follow-up process during the past year was minimal or at times nonexistent. Two other enhancement providers said that they provide materials or other resources to help the program reinforce what was learned at the enhancement session. Another two providers specifically mentioned that they need to develop their post-enhancement protocols and materials.

### **Prime Time's Role in Supporting the Enhancement Relationship**

In facilitating and supporting the relationship with enhancement providers, Prime Time has successfully brought both program directors and enhancement providers to the table, established a set of guidelines that are, to degrees, understood by both parties, and sought to resolve conflicts when they occur. But Prime Time may have two further important roles in this relationship: to support enhancement providers to develop skills in program staff and to support quality in enhancement providers more directly.

A core task for Prime Time in ensuring that program directors and enhancement programs are satisfied and their needs are met is to recruit and fund enhancement providers in sufficient number, variety, and quality. As noted earlier, demand for enhancements exceeds supply, and several enhancement providers said they would like Prime Time to fund them to expand their services. Many said this would help them meet their rising costs, as well as allow them to develop the staffing and administrative capacity to raise their own quality levels. They also describe service expansion as a way to reach more children, including middle- and high school students, and improve their experiences in afterschool programs. In addition to these supports, enhancement providers would also like to see Prime Time fund transportation from program sites to enhancement agency sites to expand access for programs serving children from lower-income families who are not able to attend off-site enhancements.

Prime Time has organized meeting opportunities for enhancement providers and program directors to get to know each other and familiarize themselves with the process and the services to be delivered to programs. Thus far, Prime Time has articulated a modest set of guidelines for how roles are to be negotiated, and what programs are expected to gain from the enhancement experience. Whereas most enhancement providers said they understood Prime Time's expectation that program staff should be developing skills from the delivery of enhancements, Prime Time reportedly offered limited specific support or guidance to accomplish this task. Instead, enhancement providers said Prime Time had directly worked to develop staff skills through

activities such as the QIS, trainings, and scholarships, but, in their view, these supports only indirectly helped to develop staff skills.

### **Solving Implementation Problems**

Enhancement providers reported mixed success in resolving problems with afterschool agencies or staff, but program directors most often reported successful outcomes. The conflict resolution process in this relationship can unfold in several different ways. For example, program directors explained that if they have a problem with an instructor, they could speak to a variety of people at Prime Time and the enhancement agency to seek resolution. Most program directors said they would first speak to their quality advisor or someone else at Prime Time. If Prime Time was unable to resolve the problem, they would then contact the enhancement agency directly. Notably, many program directors' views about conflict resolution were hypothetical, as many program directors said they did not experience problems with enhancements. Program directors also said they provided most of their feedback on the enhancement evaluation forms, which are completed after the enhancement ends.

When enhancement providers encounter problems, many first speak directly to the program staff or program director. These channels appear to be largely successful, but if a problem persists, they typically contact Prime Time next. Many enhancement providers say they have not experienced problems but feel (as do program directors) that they would receive a prompt and helpful response from Prime Time if they requested it. Other enhancement providers said that they would like a more formalized process with Prime Time when service relations break down.

Although most conflicts revolve around basic organizational issues such as being on time or following through on commitments (e.g., the number of kids present not as promised), perhaps the most important area of disagreement for enhancement providers and program directors was their perception of the purpose of enhancements. The biggest concern for many enhancement providers is that program directors seem to feel entitled to receive the enhancements and undervalue the effort and staff time that enhancement providers put into preparing for enhancements, including scheduling and traveling to program sites. When programs are not prepared for the arrival of an enhancement provider, fail to have the number of children promised present, or are simply not open on days when an enhancement has been scheduled, enhancement providers described feeling marginalized by these breaches and by program staff insensitivity about them.

### **Technical Assistance**

This year, Prime Time has continued to put in place measures to increase quality among both enhancement providers and afterschool program staff, as well as to provide support to both groups around the provision of enhancements. Prime Time has continued to have a staff member dedicated to helping to establish, support, and reinforce the relationship between enhancement providers, afterschool program directors, and, more indirectly, afterschool program staff. Other Prime Time staff members helped plan to ensure that the enhancements complement other Prime



Time services and supports and work toward the same goals of professional development and better program quality. Prime Time gives technical assistance to enhancement providers to develop the quality of the enhancements and, indirectly, to develop quality in afterschool programs. For example, this year Prime Time helped enhancement providers develop curricula to be delivered to afterschool programs. Several enhancement providers mentioned how much they appreciated and benefited from the high-quality, free training they have been able to take advantage of as a result of their relationship with Prime Time.

All the enhancement providers described Prime Time's mandated trainings around the QIS system and standards as useful. They considered the QIS standards particularly applicable to the work they do with afterschool programs. For example, one enhancement provider said: "The QIS standards seem to apply to what we are doing in our enhancement program. One of the things we would like to work on is making activities more student led, encouraging more student inquiry."

Prime Time required enhancement providers to take their online QIS training prior to the in-person training, and several providers mentioned that the online course maximized what they were able to gain from in-person training. One director reported that training on the QIS inspired the agency's summer camp director to incorporate the QIS standards into internal training for all of the summer camp staff. The camp director reportedly decided to do this "so that staff can look at the quality standards and indicators, not only because they're important to Prime Time, but just because we thought they were such a good set of standards for addressing what is a quality program."

In addition to the enhancements they offer, several enhancement providers are funded by Prime Time to offer a type of training called "train the trainers." This leveraging training method typically trains individuals who then return to their agency to train additional staff, as noted above in the case of the summer camp director. It is especially useful when sending all program staff to a training session is not feasible. In the context of enhancements and afterschool programs, however, train-the-trainer sessions allow afterschool program staff to attend a session on a particular enhancement topic, such as photography or paper-making, in order to return to their programs and teach what they have learned to children. The trained staff member may also train others at their program site to conduct the enhancement.

Six of the enhancement providers offer train-the-trainer sessions. However, some reported that programs most often choose "straight" enhancements instead. They believe this is because programs are often trying to fill scheduling gaps, as mentioned earlier. In addition, some programs repeatedly request the same enhancement. One enhancement provider puts it this way:

Programs' inclinations are often to plug holes in their programming with the enhancements rather than go to the effort of participating in train-the-trainers. With some encouragement from Prime Time for programs to participate in the train-the-trainers, and some requirements of enhancement providers to provide a certain number of train-the-

trainers per year, possibly some of the responsibility and ownership of the enhancements could shift from the enhancement providers to programs

In the absence of further guidance and support from Prime Time on thoughtfully using train-the-trainer sessions, many programs seem likely to continue to use enhancements narrowly to “plug holes.”

### **Assessment for Enhancement Quality**

As we mentioned earlier, Prime Time required enhancement providers to attend training on the QIS this year. Without exception, enhancement providers said that they found the training, and specifically the QIS and the standards that make up the PBC-PQA assessment tool, to be applicable and useful for their purposes. In May 2009, four enhancement agencies’ offerings were assessed using the PBC-PQA tool and feedback was provided, and each of these agencies will be reassessed in May 2010. These agencies are participating in a Prime Time pilot project to determine whether the tool can effectively assess program quality for enhancement agencies and whether enhancement agencies can increase the quality of their work as measured by this assessment.

### **Meetings**

Prime Time has also attempted to improve the quality of enhancement agencies’ offerings for afterschool programs by establishing quarterly enhancement provider meetings and requiring enhancement providers to attend Prime Time’s monthly networking events for afterschool program staff. The quarterly meetings allow newer enhancement providers to get to know other providers and become familiar with how Prime Time operates. For all enhancement providers, the quarterly meetings provide the opportunity to network and share problems and brainstorm solutions with Prime Time staff and fellow enhancement providers. One specific benefit to enhancement provider agencies arising from the quarterly meeting opportunities was that some of the agencies are now collaborating with each other on projects unrelated to the services they are contracted to provide through Prime Time. Almost without exception, enhancement providers say that they find these meetings very helpful. Some providers mentioned, however, that they would appreciate even more “open” time on the meeting agendas for providers to address whatever they want, as they find sharing experiences with other providers extremely useful. And, as we described earlier, enhancement providers use the monthly networking events to learn about afterschool programs, market their services, and begin negotiations with potential enhancement users.

### **Prime Time’s Role in Supporting Program Staff to Use Enhancements**

As mentioned previously, enhancement providers and program directors shared only a partial understanding of Prime Time’s expectations about what program staff should be doing during enhancement sessions. Almost all agreed that program staff are to be present in the room during

enhancement sessions and are to assist the instructor in various ways, such as monitoring the children's behavior. Beyond this basic understanding, expectations were often unclear. Some directors did say, however, that Prime Time had communicated to them this year that enhancements should be utilized as a skills-building opportunity for staff. Some enhancement providers said that continuation of the enhancement after its conclusion in some form "was important to Prime Time" and that they had begun to address this or planned to in the near future.

Prime Time staff increasingly recognized the lack of clarity around expectations for program directors and enhancement providers during the past year. In response, Prime Time staff developed internal consensus about what they wanted, what they could reasonably expect of enhancement providers and program directors, and how this should be communicated. Prime Time's thinking and planning around the enhancements have included an assessment of enhancement providers' needs, program directors' and other program staff's needs, children's needs, and how to best go about shifting more responsibility and ownership to programs, thereby potentially paving the way for effectively sustaining the enhancements.

Prime Time did not require enhancement providers to produce specific materials and/or activities that could be left with program staff this year to support sustaining the enhancement experience, though it reportedly planned to do something like this in the coming year. However, Prime Time staff did inform enhancement providers about the usefulness of "leave-behinds" in continuing the learning gained by children, and the importance of reinforcing what was learned from the enhancements in some way. A few enhancement providers mentioned that they would appreciate support from Prime Time in the preparation of extension lessons and/or materials based on their offerings.

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## Summary

In recent years, Prime Time has made important changes in its efforts to offer enhanced programming options to afterschool programs. It has expanded the number and variety of outside agencies that provide enhancement opportunities, which now include such activities as music, theater, dance, visual arts, entrepreneurship, and computer design. It has also narrowed the eligibility of programs to receive these enhancements, targeting participants in the QIS and the most distressed areas in Palm Beach County. Prime Time has also added to its focus of providing opportunities to children to experience new content or develop skills new efforts to increase the capacity of afterschool programs to improve their quality and to continue to teach the material presented in the enhancement.

These enhancement sessions are attractive to program staff, and the number of QIS agencies using enhancements increased by almost 50 percent over the past year. Still, they are in greater demand than enhancement agencies can fulfill, and this supply-and-demand is one dynamic at play in the relationship between program directors and enhancement providers. Program directors, on the whole, describe the process of requesting enhancements as simple, though not all

programs get the enhancements they want, or in the number they desire. The enhancements that happen are described, generally, as high-quality and satisfying both children's needs and the organization's interests in providing a richer set of activities. For their part, enhancement providers were generally satisfied with the relationship as well, though they are often careful about agreeing to provide enhancements without vetting their afterschool program partners and identifying specific expectations up front. Enhancement providers also raised some important questions about whether programs had a myopic view of the role of enhancements—seeing them primarily as “filling gaps” in the schedule—or fully appreciated the preparation and other work undertaken by enhancement providers in offering these services.

Prime Time's expectations that enhancements should be building the capacity of staff and the program were not clearly understood by enhancement providers and program directors. There was a common understanding between enhancement providers and program directors that program staff were to be present and helpful with such things as children's behavior while the enhancements were provided. In practice, enhancement providers reported that some program staff were very engaged and actually learned both content and new skills for working with children. Others were reportedly distracted by paperwork, phone calls, or other activities. There was also little consensus about what should happen after the enhancement provider left, and whether continuing the enhancement in some form was desirable or even feasible.

To support and improve the enhancement experience, Prime Time has put in place training expectations for enhancement providers and requirements to attend meetings; these were described as useful for refining thinking about quality, for providing opportunities to share concerns with others who might help, and for connecting partners in formal and informal ways. These supports, as well as the growing understanding during the year among Prime Time staff that expectations about enhancements needed to be clarified, are indications of Prime Time's continued progress in addressing specific problems and thinking systemically about quality improvement.

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# Summary and Conclusions

The focus of this 2008-2009 Prime Time evaluation was twofold. First, and foremost, we were charged with assessing the implementation and potential staff development impacts of enhancement units provided by 14 local organizations in Palm Beach County in the areas of inclusion, literacy, science, technology, money management, environmental education, and the performing arts. For this year, Prime Time not only expanded the number of enhancement providers but also modified its expectations for these providers. Although enhancements had technically been available to all programs in the county in previous years, Prime Time had always placed emphasis on targeting programs serving lower-income communities. This year, Prime Time clearly stated to enhancement providers and interested programs that the provision of enhancements was to be restricted to programs that are funded by CSC or through a subsidy program at Family Central, programs located in Title I schools, and programs in selected low-income communities (designated by zip code). Enhancement providers were also asked to report more frequently on their activities than in the past and to participate in some training to increase their familiarity with the QIS and good youth development program practice.

The second focus of the evaluation was the QIS, particularly to assess the impact of a change in funding of afterschool providers on their ability to attend to the quality of their programs. Methods for the evaluation included interviews with 14 enhancement providers and 42 program directors. We also participated in monthly meetings of enhancement providers and quality advisors, spoke regularly with Prime Time staff, and analyzed data on enhancement use collected by Prime Time.

Below we summarize our findings and provide recommendations for improving the enhancement process.

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## The QIS: Year 2

High-quality programs can be the result of many internal and external influences, but the program directors interviewed consistently identified the QIS as a major driver of quality improvement.

Program directors had few concerns with the external assessment process, were more comfortable being observed and scored by outside assessors than in the past, and more accepting of the assessment scores report. This acceptance is, at least partially, a function of ongoing participation in the QIS, as some directors expressed confidence that repeated assessments over time yield a more accurate picture of their program's level of functioning.

Higher levels of satisfaction, increased levels of program quality, and a decline in concerns about the QIS standards and assessment process appear to be partly the result of adjustments made by participating organizations and programs to conform to the QIS processes and expectations. Participation in the QIS appears to help directors be more intentional in their efforts to provide quality across multiple levels of programming and move toward a continual conceptualization of quality improvement.

Some barriers to full and effective participation in the QIS continue to exist—primarily time constraints. In their efforts to achieve deep and lasting quality improvement, a number of directors said that the QIS could only get them so far before they hit a quality plateau, short of their goals. Many providers identified other factors that affect quality, including support from their executive director or principal in making programmatic decisions, high standards of the director, alternate assessment tools, internal (non-Prime Time) professional development opportunities for staff, staff qualifications, and luck in being able to identify and hire good staff who are motivated to stay with the program. Indeed, program directors most often pointed to the quality of staff they are able to hire as a key barrier to further advancing quality.

With respect to the expected impact of the funding transition on quality, the results were mixed. Programs that anticipated receiving less money as a result of the funding transition identified fears about potential staff layoffs, turnover, and decreased access to programmatic resources. Of special concern were programs in more geographically isolated parts of the county and programs serving undocumented migrant workers who would not be able to prove eligibility under the new system. At the same time, although many programs expressed anxiety about the transition process, at this early stage of the transition many program directors were either uncertain about the long-term result or thought that they would be able to maintain their quality under the new funding system.

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## **The Enhancement Process**

Enhancements offer valuable opportunities to support afterschool programs in several essential ways. These include making available new kinds of programming, at higher levels of expertise, than would otherwise be possible, and the opportunity for program staff to learn new content that they can later teach children and new skills for working with children. Enhancements are an opportunity to increase the quality being provided at the moment and to build capacity for quality services in the longer term.

The challenge for Prime Time, revealed in our discussions with afterschool providers, enhancement providers, and Prime Time staff themselves, is that key partners do not yet agree upon what is expected of enhancements, or what is possible once the enhancement providers leave. Further, given high demand for these services, enhancement providers are in a position to allocate scarce resources by imposing conditions upon programs. One provider described in detail laying down ultimatums to programs that did not seem authentically engaged in the enhancement, and the willingness to walk away unless certain conditions were met. At the same time, our understanding is that formal train-the-trainer sessions on these enhancements are undersubscribed. There are opportunities for Prime Time to shape the conversation about the place of both of these supports going forward, building upon the generally high levels of satisfaction of both enhancement providers and program directors and upon the existing supports currently provided and generally valued (e.g., online training, networking meetings, enhancement provider meetings).

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## Questions Going Forward

We identify below a few questions that are drawn from our findings and that might be helpful in shaping Prime Time activities going forward:

- What are the specific needs and interests among programs that want more time with their quality advisors? How closely are these interests matched with what we understand about keys to quality programs?
- What opportunities exist for attending to staff recruitment and hiring practices as ways of increasing program and organizational quality? What role might quality advisors have in initiating or supporting this work?
- Are there ways for key Prime Time supports to be more accessible to program directors who would be interested but who claim that time constraints limit their participation? For example, given the demonstrated value of online training for enhancement providers, are there other ways that media (including social media) might be used to facilitate networking, training, and coordination?
- What are the opportunities for Prime Time to help afterschool programs understand in a more holistic way how enhancements fit within other goals, such as organizational capacity, staff training, and program quality?
- How can “train-the-trainer” offerings by enhancement providers be used more often by afterschool programs as avenues for improving quality, and how can Prime Time support the use of these training sessions? Is there a helpful way to link access to enhancements to participation in train-the-trainer sessions?

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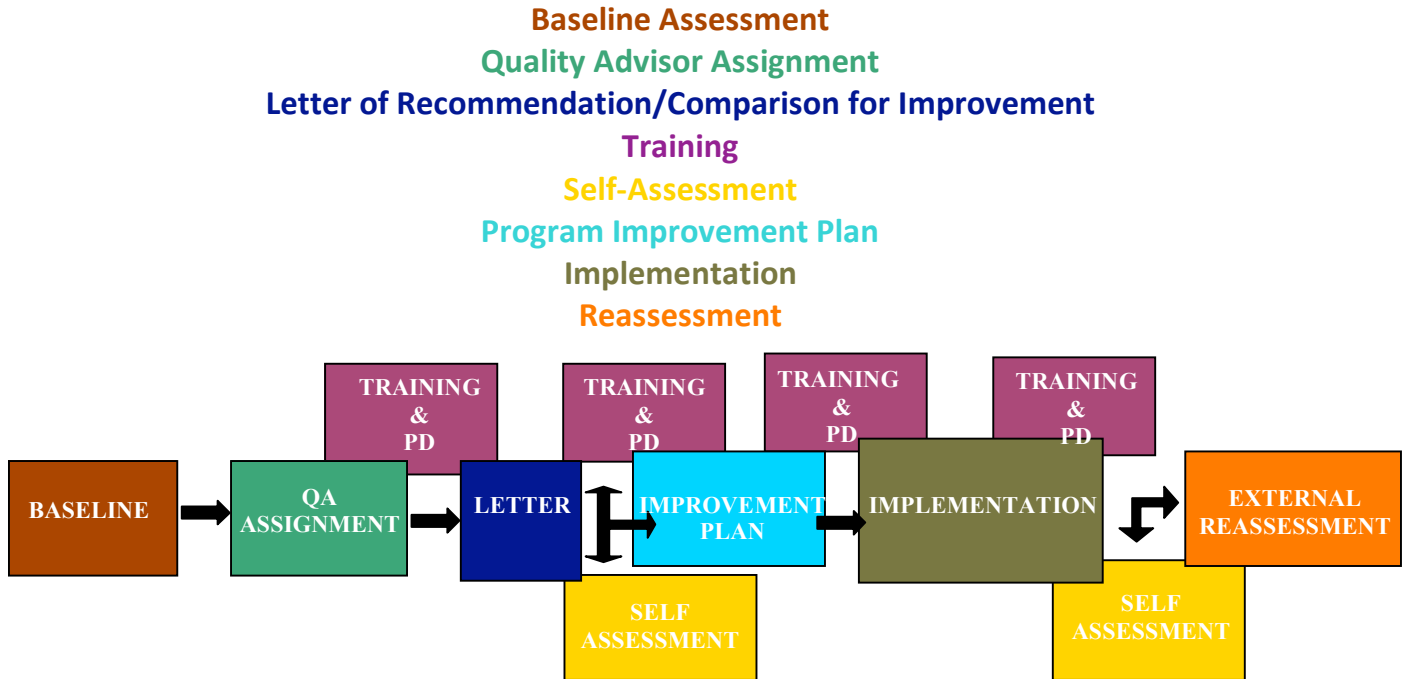
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# Appendix A: Overview of Prime Time's QIS

# Quality Improvement System for Afterschool



- **Baseline Assessment**  
Family Central collects baseline data from every afterschool program in the QIS.
- **QA Assignment**  
All programs are assigned a Quality Advisor to assist in data interpretation and program planning.
- **Letter of Recommendation/Comparison**  
Quality Advisors draft a summary of the assessment report with recommendations for improvement.
- **Program Quality Assessment (PQA) Training**  
Training offered directly addresses items and indicators on the PBC-PQA.
- **Self-Assessment**  
Prime Time Quality Advisors support program staff in conducting self-assessments using PBC-PQA.
- **Program Improvement Plan (PIP)**  
Providers use baseline data and Prime Time recommendations to develop a Plan.
- **Implementation**

Providers carry out plans to improve quality through various support mechanisms.

- **External Reassessment**
- Family Central conducts annual re-assessment of each program.

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## **Appendix B: Descriptions of 2008-2009 Enhancement Providers**

## Enhancement Provider Descriptions:

### **1. The Arc of Palm Beach County**

The Arc's Inclusion Specialist provides child-specific training to afterschool staff that will involve modeling and coaching on the use of techniques that support the inclusion of children with disabilities in afterschool settings. Training additionally focuses on specific disabilities and the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Additionally, specialists provide more direct training and support to afterschool staff on the accommodations that may be necessary to meet a child's individual needs, ensuring that children with special needs have the same access to programs and activities as any child in Palm Beach County. The Inclusion Specialist also provides guidance, support, and planning to parents of children with disabilities who are interested in enrolling their child in afterschool programs.

### **2. Center for Art and Media Literacy: Youth Speak Out International**

The mission of Youth Speak Out International is to empower youth within culturally diverse communities to express their thoughts while creating independence through advocacy and equality in order to create positive global change. Building on an understanding of the role of media in today's society, the program encourages students to rely upon their own interpretations and experiences of the world around them. The program delivers video technology curriculum to emphasize multicultural television program creation, media literacy, and life exploration. As a community youth enrichment program, Youth Speak Out includes reading, writing, speaking, and listening, and also provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate, and create effective messages.

### **3. Center for Creative Education (CCE)**

CCE's mission is to use the arts to enrich and transform children's educational experiences. Through its two main programs, Project LEAP and CADRE, CCE serves schools in disadvantaged communities to help them improve their educational performance, improve parent and community involvement in the educational process, and promote systemic change in their approach to education. CADRE utilizes professional, practicing artists specially trained in contemporary educational strategies. The artists have received in-depth training in areas of arts integration, multiple intelligence theory, school law, and curriculum mapping. Offerings attempt to move beyond a traditional arts-and-crafts approach, incorporating various educational, arts-integrated themes into aesthetic sensibilities to enrich educational and emotional experiences. CCE also offers Train-the-Trainer sessions, which are designed to provide information, skills, and tools for afterschool staff to develop and deliver their own enhancements at afterschool sites. Train-the-Trainer sessions include: Photography, Crazy for Creative Movement, Paper Making, and Drawing 101—the very basics.

#### **4. Children's Technology Workshop/Accellearn**

For three years, Children's Technology Workshop (CTW) has focused on developing and delivering applied-technology curricula to children in afterschool settings in Palm Beach County. Educators, scientists, engineers, and technology professionals provide trainings and enhancement offerings to develop creative thinking through hands-on high-tech workshops. Utilizing multi-disciplinary activities to teach technological concepts, CTW emphasizes an active and creative approach, rather than a passive approach, to technology. Programs include: Construction & Engineering (Robotics), Video Game Creation (Computer Programming), Digital Animation (Stop-Motion and 2D Digital Animation), and Digital Art (Graphic Design).

#### **5. Junior Achievement of the Palm Beaches**

Junior Achievement (JA) teaches financial and entrepreneurship skills through experiential educational activities focused upon developing youths' economic education. Emphasizing creativity and innovativeness, the curriculum seeks to help youth to become workforce ready through developing skills such as personal financial literacy and understanding of supply and demand within the marketplace. This curriculum seeks to build upon deeper child developmental and educational needs, such as developing self-confidence, and it aligns with important state and national educational standards. JA was founded by local business leaders to search for constructive ways in which corporations can contribute to youths' economic understanding and success. Programs include: Dollars and Sense, Career Pathways, and It's My Business. In addition to enhancements delivered at afterschool sites, JA offers a 5-day summer Biz Camp. Campers start and run a business with staff assistance to sell products and services in the mini economy of JA BizTown. Campers receive paychecks and use a personal checking account. JA receives funding from local businesses, individuals, corporations, organizations, and foundations.

#### **6. Kravis Center for the Performing Arts**

The Kravis Center seeks to use the arts to provide the motivation youth need to achieve proficiency in reading fluency, language development, fundamental thinking skills, and effective social behavior. Special workshops are offered at the Kravis Center and at afterschool sites, including Tales & Scales Imagine That! Music Workshop Series; Celebration of West African Culture; Pan Pipe Making Workshop; Verbal Mayhem: Spoken Word Workshop; Youth Ballroom Dance Series; and the Artist Residency Program. Professional Development Workshops are also offered for afterschool staff to support and enrich the overall arts experience for youth.

## **7. Lake Worth Playhouse**

The Lake Worth Playhouse's Summer Workshops are offered to 60 middle-school students to introduce them to live theater and Broadway musicals. Instructors provide training to students in singing, dancing, and acting in order to build a sense of accomplishment and community. Additionally, the playhouse partners with four middle-school programs to provide Broadway Musical Theatre Arts classes for underserved populations. The various sites will join together to create a Broadway revue style camp performance at the Lake Worth Playhouse main stage, offered to an audience of family, friends, and community leaders.

## **8. Palm Beach Community College: Summer Youth College**

PBCC offers a 6-week Summer Youth College program for school-age youth at college campuses around the county. It offers youth the opportunity to select from a variety of classes to enjoy a unique college experience that is both educational and fun. Youth can enroll in a class schedule similar to a college format, allowing them the flexibility to customize their own schedules based on their personal interests. Classes include: Magic 101, Photography, Community Art Quilt, Junior Journalism, Let's Meditate, African Dance/Drumming, and Your Head: a 2D & 3D Journey.

## **9. Palm Beach County Literacy Coalition**

The Literacy Coalition's After School Reads program provides literacy training for afterschool staff using the research-based KidzLit curriculum. The trainings consist of a series of workshops designed to provide hands-on strategies for reading aloud to children and developing literacy skills. Workshops also incorporate alternative reading strategies such as sight words and fluency practice. As part of participation in the program, each site receives approximately 350 books to build an afterschool library. Training and materials are also available to develop children's English fluency and reading comprehension.

## **10. Palm Beach Zoo Education Outreach**

The mission of the Palm Beach Zoo is to provide an outdoor classroom of living creatures, fostering awareness, appreciation, and respect for the natural world. Zoo animals and zoo educators travel to sites to offer important lessons about the environment and conservation. The Zoo encourages science learning by capturing the imagination of children with interactive activities and the opportunity to see and touch zoo animals. Educational Outreach programs meet the Florida Sunshine State Standards for science and assist children in preparation for the FCAT exams. Sites can choose from the following offerings: Animal Adaptations, Classification Connections, Florida Wildlife and Wetlands, and Tropical Rain Forest.

## **11. Pine Jog Environmental Education Center**

The Pine Jog Environmental Education Center of Florida Atlantic University seeks to develop, provide, and model environmental education programs that foster an awareness and appreciation for the natural world. Pine Jog’s educational programs use environmental themes and concepts as the context for meeting academic standards while instilling a sense of stewardship toward the earth and its inhabitants. Pine Jog’s afterschool enhancement program consists of two components. First, the afterschool module consists of four environmental lessons delivered in four site visits over the course of 4 to 6 weeks during the school year. Each lesson is hands-on, highly interactive, and aligned to the Florida Next Generation Standards in science, math, language arts, and social studies. The second component extends the environmental education learning experience by providing students from each of the participating sites the opportunity to attend a 1-week “sleep-away” summer camp at Pine Jog’s Everglades Youth Conservation Camp at no cost.

## **12. School District of Palm Beach County: Afterschool Newspaper Project “Chit Chat Times”**

The “Chit Chat Times” Teen Newspaper is a multi-cultural newspaper created by teens for teens. The project brings together middle-school afterschool students in the eastern and western county communities to produce a quarterly teen newspaper and website with original writing and photography that will be distributed throughout PBC afterschool programs. The purpose of the newspaper is to enhance the visual arts, creative writing, and critical thinking capacity for these youth, as well as to encourage communication between eastern and western afterschool sites. All youth participants learn to ask questions about what they see, hear, and read as a means of empowering them to make wise and informed life decisions.

## **13. School District of Palm Beach County: Champs Academic Enrichment Initiative**

Champs seeks to develop and support ways to activate student learning through an engaging, interactive, theme-based academic enrichment model. Champs uses a nationally recognized afterschool curriculum to train existing afterschool staff in “best teaching practices.” Through training, coaching, and modeling, key afterschool staff members are able to support children’s learning by blending math and reading content into an experiential, hands-on, afterschool-friendly learning approach. All afterschool staff members who are trained to deliver the curriculum receive a stipend for this additional responsibility. The Champs model also provides an onsite educator to each participating program to provide coordination, specialized training, and technical assistance to programs on an ongoing basis.



#### **14. South Florida Science Museum**

The Science Museum incorporates a layering method for disseminating science-specific topics. Through the use of learning through relationship building with both children and afterschool providers, it also seeks to inspire deeper levels of parent involvement through the use of provided take-home materials. Museum instructors will provide three visits to afterschool programs located at Prime Time. After these visits, afterschool programs will be invited to the museum for a guided tour to learn how topics integrate and affect each other, demonstrating how science is a part of everyday life. Offerings include enhancements such as Shark Tooth Lab, Chemical Concoctions Lab, Mineral ID Lab, and Crime Scene Sleuths.

#### **15. YMCA of South Palm Beach County**

The YMCA's mission is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind, and body for all. Their enhancement offerings seek to strengthen and expand sports programming in afterschool settings. The YMCA has recently expanded the sports and wellness enhancement program to include league activity among many afterschool sites. Offerings include: Ballroom Dancing, Living Chess, Double-Dutch, Softball, Cheerleading, and Karate.

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# **Appendix C: Interview Guides for Program Directors and Enhancement Providers**

## Phases I - V: Interview Guide for Program Directors

*(Note to interviewer: Consider this a guide for your interview, rather than a protocol. While we do want all of the items answered if possible, feel free to change wording slightly as needed or change the ordering of items as seems appropriate, for example. Also, with all of the items below, consider whether the respondent has already answered the questions naturally to avoid repetition and to save time.)*

1. Can you tell me a little bit about the mission of your organization, when you started working with Prime Time, and how you began working with them?
2. Comparing this year to previous years, how does your capacity to attend to the quality of your programming differ? *(Probe if needed: What types of changes have you experienced?)*
3. How has your program's quality changed over the last few years? What purpose has the QIS served in your program? Do you attribute any of those changes in quality to your participation in the QIS? Has anything outside of the QIS influenced or helped shape your program's quality?
4. Are there things that the QIS could be doing, but isn't, to facilitate the highest quality of care in your program? If so, what are those things? How would you revise the QIS in order to address those things? Are there parts of your program that the QIS does not influence or affect?
5. When you think about the expectations put on your agency by the QIS system, which ones require the most work or are most difficult for you to accommodate?
6. I'd like to talk about funding for a bit. As you may know, there is a transition being phased in to change how programs receive funding from CSC. Are you familiar with this transition?

*If not:* Instead of reviewing proposals from individual programs, CSC is providing funding to the Early Learning Coalition, which in turn is asking Family Central to distribute it. Funding will be based upon student attendance at programs.

Do you know what "phase" of this transition your program is assigned to, and whether you have completed this transition yet?

7. What are your thoughts about the transition in afterschool program funding from the Children's Services Council (CSC) to Family Central? In general, has that had – or do you expect it to have – any impact on your capacity to attend to program quality? *(Probe with the following if they don't answer them naturally):*
  - a. Have you had a conversation or visit from Prime Time staff about how to prioritize your budget under this new funding process?

*(Note to interviewer: Keep in mind that the last meeting/training to be conducted with transitioning programs is scheduled for 4/27, so sites in Phase III and IV may not have been through this at the time of our interviews.)*

*If yes:* Do you think this conversation or visit was useful? *If no:* What is your current thinking about how the priorities of your budget might need to change, if at all?

b. What process have you had in place for recording attendance, and how well does that work? What is your understanding of the new process for collecting attendance data and the rules on attendance (i.e., only 3 absences per month are allowed)? Do you have any general thoughts about the expectations to reimburse based upon attendance?

c. How do you feel about not going through CSC and their proposal and monitoring processes anymore?

d. How do you think these changes in funding may affect your relationships with other afterschool programs?

e. Do you have any sense of how responsive CSC and Family Central have been to feedback from programs about the new reimbursement system?

8. Which of the supports and services that Prime Time offers are you aware of (*Probes if needed: networking events, enhancement programs, training [including train-the-trainer], quality advising, peer coaching*)? Which of these supports and services has your program participated in? How satisfied have you been with these services? Please explain.

9. (*Note to interviewer: If respondent indicates has used enhancements in item 8 ...*) I'd like to talk a little more about the enhancements offered through Prime Time. What has your experience been with the enhancements? (*Note to interviewer: If program hasn't experienced enhancements, ask why.*) (*Probes if needed: Is the process for requesting enhancements clear to you? Have you generally received the enhancements you've requested? Have you been pleased with the process? What is your perception of the quality of the instruction?*)

10. What do you hope to get out of using enhancement providers: for the participants, your staff, and/or your agency? What expectations or goals has Prime Time communicated to you with respect to the enhancements? How has Prime Time supported your program in getting and using enhancements? Who do you talk to when you have problems with enhancements, or want to give feedback?

11. What is the role of your program staff when enhancement instructors come? (*Probe if needed: Is staff primarily present to assist the instructor and manage behavioral issues if they arise?*) Is staff there to learn the content in order to teach it after the enhancement ends?

12. If you've been using enhancement providers for more than the last year, has anything changed in your work with them? (*Probes if needed: the quality of their work, the ease of working with them, their expectations or roles within the program.*)

13. Can you tell me about the best experience you've had with an enhancement or enhancement provider? What about the most challenging?

14. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me about how the QIS is working for your program in general and the enhancement process in particular?

15. Can you suggest any other ways that Prime Time could improve their efforts to support afterschool programs in Palm Beach County? Is there anything else you'd like to share about anything?

## Interview Guide for Enhancement Providers

*(Note to Interviewer: Consider this a guide for your interview, rather than a protocol. While we do want all of the items answered if possible, feel free to change wording slightly as needed or change the ordering of items as seems appropriate, for example. Also, with all of the items below, consider whether the respondent has already answered the questions naturally to avoid repetition and to save time.)*

1. Can you tell me a little bit about the mission of your organization, how long it has been around, when you started working with Prime Time, and how you began working with them?
2. What would you say are your agency's goals with respect to providing enhancements to programs?
3. What do you view as Prime Time's goals with respect to providing enhancements to programs?
4. What is the process for programs requesting enhancements from your organization? What influences their choice of enhancements, do you think? What is your perception of the match between the enhancements programs request and what they need or are prepared to receive? *(Probe if needed: For example, in your perception, does it seem as if programs have given careful thought to the needs/wants of the youth their programs serve in their choice of particular enhancements?)*
5. When you start working with a new program or a new program director, how do you go about establishing your relationship? *(Probe if needed: How do you and/or your staff learn about the needs and resources of the programs?)*
6. Are you familiar with the various supports Prime Time offers to assist programs with improving the quality of their programs? If so, how do you think the enhancements fit in with the goals of Prime Time's quality improvement efforts?
7. Have you participated in the enhancement provider meetings Prime Time has begun convening? *(Note to Interviewer: The first meeting was held in mid-January and the next one will be in mid-April, so respondents might not have much to say at the beginning of this process. Depending on when the interview is conducted, you might probe for opinions about the purpose of the meetings and initial impressions.)* Do you find them useful? If so, what do you think you have gained from participating? Do you have any suggestions for improving the meetings or other communication?
8. What are some of the challenges that you and your staff have encountered in providing the enhancements to afterschool programs? *(Note to Interviewer: If not previously mentioned, we should find out if they think they are generally able to meet the demand from program providers.)* *(If mentions challenges: Has Prime Time been helpful in supporting your program to meet those challenges?)*

What do you think that Prime Time could do that it is not doing already to support your program?

9. What is your agency's relationship with other enhancement provider agencies?

10. What do you think of the way that Prime Time has asked that you report your enhancement activities to them? (*Probe if needed: Does the process work for your program?*)

11. Where do enhancements fit relative to other programs within your agency? Are they central/peripheral to your agency's mission? Are they receiving increasing or declining resources?

12. What does quality instruction look like in the enhancement process? What is your process for ensuring the quality of enhancement instructors?

13. How do you select instructors to hire? What qualifications and characteristics do you look for?

14. What are your expectations about the role of the program staff during enhancement sessions? (*Probe if needed [if respondent doesn't directly speak to the intent of the instructor, please ask the following]: Is it the intention of you and your instructors that program staff present during the enhancement sessions would be able to conduct the same session in the future?*)

How do enhancement instructors and local program staff negotiate their respective roles?

15. How long does each enhancement unit (*confirm word usage here with interviewee*) typically last? Does this seem like the right length of time – should it be shorter or longer?

16. What formal or informal role do enhancement instructors have, if any, with programs after a particular enhancement has concluded? (*Probe if needed: Is there any formal follow-up planned, or an informal interaction that occurs after the completion of a unit?*).

17. How does Prime Time support you and your instructors in providing a quality program for children? How does Prime Time support you in working with program staff and developing their skills? In what other ways can Prime Time support you and your staff to provide quality enhancements?

18. Should we have time during our study to interview instructors directly about their experiences, we would like to. Can you recommend two instructors – preferably one who has a lot of experience and one who is fairly new to being an instructor – who we might request an interview with at a later date?









### **About Chapin Hall**

Established in 1985, Chapin Hall is an independent policy research center whose mission is to build knowledge that improves policies and programs for children and youth, families, and their communities.

Chapin Hall's areas of research include child maltreatment prevention, child welfare systems and foster care, youth justice, schools and their connections with social services and community organizations, early childhood initiatives, community change initiatives, workforce development, out-of-school time initiatives, economic supports for families, and child well-being indicators.

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