

PACT 2006 Mayoral Forum

Critical Issue: After-School/Extended-Day

Background

In 1993, during a time of heightened concern about public safety, the City of San Jose, together with PACT, founded Homework Centers as “safe, well-lit places” for children to go in the hours after school. While the hope was that homework assistance would help children do better in school, these centers were not founded with the intention – or capacity – of closing the huge academic achievement gap prevalent in today’s schools.

Since that time, however, some major changes have occurred in the world of after-school programming. First and foremost, as the following figures show, after-school funding has increased tremendously over the past decade:

- On a federal level, in 2002, California started administering the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, which currently puts \$136 million per year into after-school programming throughout the state. And under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, schools on Program Improvement (PI) status for more than two years are required to contract with a certified Supplemental Educational Service (SES) provider for additional academic assistance outside the regular school day. As more and more schools enter PI status, the pot of money available for SES providers is growing.
- On a state level, in 1998 California created the After-School Education and Safety (ASES) program, which has grown from an initial allotment of \$50 million per year to its current level of \$121 million. Furthermore, under Proposition 49, approved by voters in 2002 and expected to be included in this year’s state budget, the amount of funding for ASES would more than quadruple to over \$550 million per year.
- On a local level, funding for Homework Centers and other after-school programs has increased from \$250,000 in 1993 to \$3.8 million for the 2004-05 school year.

The second major change has come from the intensive reporting requirements required by No Child Left Behind. These requirements have exposed the true depth of the “achievement gap” in our country and the desperate situation for those children who are on the losing end of this gap.

With these facts in mind, and also given that the City is the main operator and administrator of after-school programming in San Jose, PACT has researched how the City could support the growth of a “new generation” of after-school programming – that not only serves as a safe place after-school, but that is also geared toward improving the academic performance of those children most affected by the achievement gap.

This research reveals that, in the best academic-oriented after-school programs, the curriculum is seamlessly integrated into the regular school day curriculum. It is also clear that the biggest

challenge facing nearly every single after-school program in the City was finding well-trained, professional staff to run their programs, and that the best programs had teachers from the school site somehow involved in the program.

This research also highlights what many innovative charter and district schools have known and practiced for many years – that the best after-school programs are actually “extended school days.” This does not refer to a school-wide “homework club” staffed by teachers, but, rather, a structured, longer school day that is part of the overall school program. These findings are also consistent with a movement happening in cities across the country – if you look at almost any innovative elementary, middle or high school in the country achieving high results, the most basic practice they employ is simply providing *more in-class learning time with teachers*.

New opportunities taking shape

With the triggering of Proposition 49 in this year’s state budget, an estimated \$14 million is expected to come into the City for after-school programming. This, along with Supplemental Educational Services (SES) monies coming from No Child Left Behind, is spurring the growth of a new “after-school industry” ready to take advantage of all this extra funding. But the basic facts remain: Kids learn best from those who are most qualified to teach them (i.e. their teachers). And the best “after-school” curriculum is in fact a continuation of the school day curriculum.

With this influx of outside money, the City is in the process of re-examining how it allocates the approximately \$3.8 million it puts into after-school programming. With such a huge amount of new money coming into the City for after-school, now is the perfect opportunity for the City to invest a portion of its after-school budget into piloting this new, innovative practice that could revolutionize the way we think of after-school programs.

The proposal is that the City would invest \$600,000 of its after-school budget to fund a pilot extended-day project in three of the City’s lowest-performing school districts – where all the teachers at a school would agree to work (and get paid for) an extra hour every day. The extra one-hour is consistent with the amount of after-school time usually devoted to homework help, and is also based on the anticipated cost analysis for a school site of approximately 20 teachers serving 450 to 500 students.

The City would work with these school districts to identify school sites where there is an institutional desire to extend the school day, and where the staff is willing to develop a new school plan that makes the best use of this extra instructional time. Finally, the City would conduct an evaluation of this program, with the goal of establishing best practices that could go toward leveraging further resources for innovative “after-school/extended-day” programs.

In order to move this effort forward, at the PACT Mayoral Forum on May 21, PACT’s grassroots volunteer leaders will ask the candidates the following question:

If elected Mayor, will you set-aside \$600,000 annually from the City after-school budget to create a pilot program of extending the school day at one school in each of the three lowest-performing districts in San Jose, once Prop. 49 funding becomes available.