

inside

- 2...research update
- 4...on the ground
- 5...voices from the fields
- 6...key resources

welcome

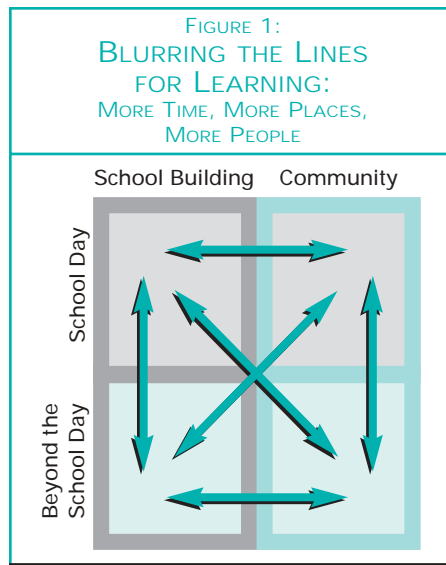
to *Forum Focus*, a regular publication of the Forum for Youth Investment. *Forum Focus* is published five times a year as an insert in *Youth Today*. The Forum for Youth Investment is dedicated to changing the odds for children, youth and their families by sparking and supporting action to improve the quality and quantity of youth investment and youth involvement in neighborhoods and across the nation.

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Back to School, *Forward to Learning*

the hours between 9:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M. are the focal point of this country's public commitment to formal learning. But the traditional time/space lines that separate school and community are being blurred in important and interesting ways. There is growing evidence that educators, policy makers, planners, philanthropists and the public understand the need to push beyond the traditional boundaries of the school day, the school building and the school agenda. The press for rapid improvements in academic performance formalized in the sweeping federal requirements of No Child Left Behind may have thwarted many educators' abilities to expand the indicators of school success beyond core academics. The press to educate all at high levels, however, has redoubled many educators'



efforts to embrace innovative strategies and find new partners. Simultaneously, it has reinforced communities' efforts to articulate their role as partners in defining goals, monitoring resources and providing learning opportunities. Bolstered by infusions of public and private funds, movement is afoot on four fronts:

1. Schools are reorganizing within — creating small learning communities, revamping curricula, rethinking instruction, rebuilding relationships with students and parents through efforts to personalize instruction and redefining the roles of nonclassroom personnel.

2. Schools are staying open — moving above and beyond traditional commitments to provide extracurricular activities and summer school to house, if not provide, formal after-school programs for elementary and middle school students. There is no doubt that this push was motivated by \$1 billion of new federal funds available through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program.

3. Schools are reaching out — strengthening partnerships with funders, businesses, colleges and universities, artists, health and social service agencies, and community-based organizations (CBOs) to bring additional expertise and services into the school building; offer students off-campus opportunities for formal learning, work and service; and, in some cases, assume primary responsibility for academic education.

4. Nonprofits are stepping up — youth-serving organizations, civic and human services nonprofits, faith-based organizations, recreation departments, libraries, museums and businesses are increasing their capacity to offer formal and informal learning opportunities that supplement and complement school (including reaching young people who have left the formal K–12 system) and expressing a commitment to be held accountable for certain academic and non-academic outcomes.

Each of these fronts presents potential strategies and resources for expanding opportunities for learning and engagement. Each has been the focal point for public and private attention over the past few decades, sometimes at the expense of another. Each represents a quadrant of what is an essentially political/legal space defined less by what is known about child and adolescent learning than by the traditional definition of K–12 education in this country that rests authority for teaching and credentialing with a single institution — school.

Educational leaders have long articulated the challenge of pushing beyond the formal boundaries of the educational system to create community partnerships for learning. Paul Hill and colleagues, in *It Takes a City*, acknowledge that “the traditional boundaries between the public school system’s responsibilities continued ▶

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the forum
FOR YOUTH INVESTMENT

Helping organizations that invest in youth, invest in change

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back to school, forward to learning, continued

and those of other community agencies are themselves part of the educational problem” and articulate a “radical approach to improving educational opportunities in a city” called the Community Partnerships strategy. John Goodlad, in *A Place Called School*, notes that “the school may be the only institution charged exclusively with the educational function, but... there is not one agency, but an ecology of institutions educating — school, home, places of worship, television, press, museums, libraries, businesses, factories...”

Seasoned advocates like Ernie Cortes, of the Industrial Areas Foundation, go even further to suggest that reclaiming education as a community responsibility is central to the redemocratization of low-income and minority communities.

There is growing evidence that the quantity and quality of young people’s formal learning is significantly enhanced when they and their families have learning opportunities and supports that extend beyond the boundaries of the traditional school day, school building and school agenda, as documented in the National Research Council’s 2002 volume *Community Programs to Promote Youth*

Development. Equally important, there is growing evidence that school/community partnerships improve the capacity of individual families, schools and communities to support learning.

Community schools are one of the most concrete examples of how the concept of a community partnership can be used to transform a school into a community institution for expanded learning. The Coalition of Community Schools recently issued *Making the Difference*, a report summarizing evaluations of 20 community schools models. Consistent positive outcomes emerged in four areas: 1) student learning, 2) family engagement, 3) school effectiveness, and 4) community vitality.

Improving formal, academic learning is not the only game in town. But the standards movement and No Child Left Behind have ensured that it will be the most important one for some time to come. There may be a time when the country is ready to understand and embrace the importance of social/emotional, informal, life-long or “free-choice” learning as vital to the health of the nation and therefore worth prioritizing. We are convinced that that time will come faster if the public understands the

meaningful role that community organizations can play as key partners in promoting traditional academic outcomes and in building the skills and experiences necessary to succeed in the 21st century.

In this issue, we explore how community partnerships to support formal learning and development matter and how they can be created and sustained.

In **research update**, we discuss the results of a new report and poll on 21st century skills that affirms that every student needs a “basics plus” education that pushes beyond core academic knowledge to embrace 21st century skills and content that, as a result, must push beyond traditional methods of instruction and assessment.

In **voices from the fields**, we interview Jean Thomases, a senior consultant with the Academy for Educational Development and the Forum, who has made a career out of “blurring the lines.”

In **on the ground**, we take a look at Springfield, Massachusetts, one of the sites of CS² — Communities and Schools for Career Success, a strategy to galvanize community/school partnerships in support of learning across the district. ■

research update **DEVELOPING 21ST CENTURY SKILLS**

What skills do educators, business leaders and the public believe young people should have? What roles do they believe schools and other institutions should play in building these skills? Research conducted by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and two recent polls by Lake Snell Perry and Associates offer insights into these questions.

In June 2003, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills,¹ a public/private organization formed in 2002 to create a

model of learning for the 21st century, issued a call to action report that presents a menu of the skills, knowledge and experiences young people need and a clear set of recommendations for what schools can do to increase their capacity to teach, manage and partner. The framework builds on earlier efforts to define “basics plus” menus — most notably the 1991 Secretary’s Commission on Achieving the Necessary Skills Report (SCANS) and the work of the 2002 National Skills Standards Board — and reflects an extensive consensus building process with educators, employers, parents, community members and students.

In that same month, the AOL Time Warner Foundation released the results of a national survey of over 1,200 adults that found that Americans are concerned

that young people are not adequately prepared for 21st century success.²

WHAT SKILLS ARE NEEDED FOR THE 21ST CENTURY?

• **Reading, writing and arithmetic.** Virtually all Americans (99 percent) still see these as the basics, with 68 percent believing that they are among the most important skills teens need to have. These findings held across demographic and occupational groups.

• **Communications and critical thinking.** Almost nine out of ten Americans believe that communications, technology, critical thinking, problem solving, adaptability (ability to adapt to a changing world) and collaboration

continued ►

¹ Partnership members include AOL Time Warner Foundation, Apple Computers, Inc., Cable in the Classroom, Cisco Systems, Inc., Dell Computer Corporation, Microsoft Corporation, National Educational Association and SAP. The U.S. Department of Education and the Appalachian Technology in Education Consortium are key partners.

² *21st Century Literacy: A Vital Component in Learning*. A report sponsored by the AOL Time Warner Foundation (June 2003).

research update, continued

make up a second cluster of critical skills. More than one-third of Americans see these skills as among the most important. Eight out of ten Americans believe tolerance is a core skill.

There is a third cluster of skills that, while seen as important by a solid majority of the public, are not seen as critical. Sixty to 70 percent of the public believe that global understanding, media analysis, creativity and community contribution are very important skills, but fewer than one-quarter believe that they are among the most important.

HOW WELL ARE SKILLS BEING TAUGHT?

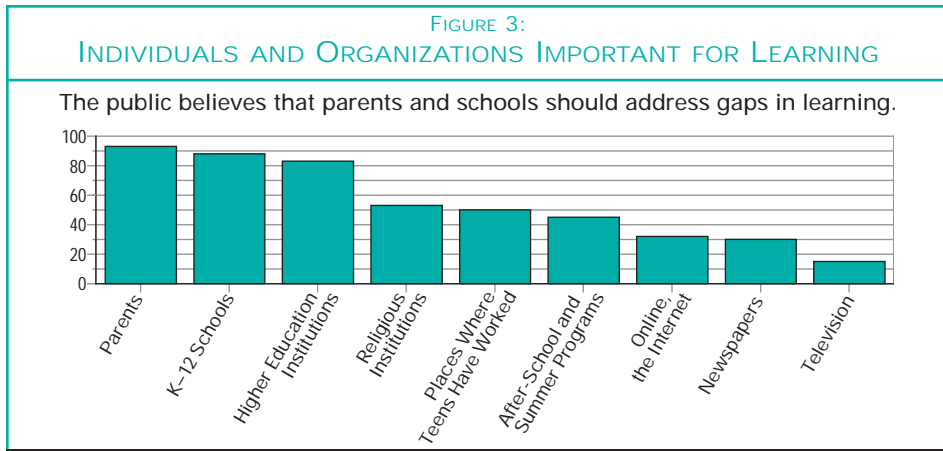
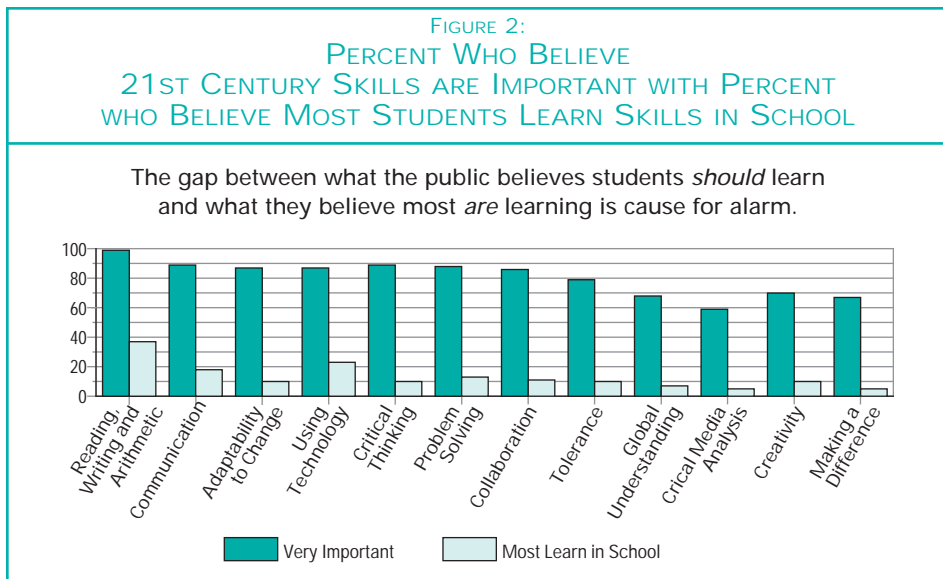
One would expect that there would be gaps between the public's perceptions of how important the 21st century skills are and how well schools are doing to ensure that most students learn these skills. The extent of the perceived gaps, however, may be cause for alarm.

Overall, only four out of ten Americans believe that schools currently do a good job at teaching these skills. Three-quarters believe that *many* young people are learning reading, writing and math skills in school, but only 37 percent believe that *most* students are learning these essential skills. The percent who believe that most students are learning other 21st century skills is even smaller. Less than a quarter of those polled believe that most students are learning any of the other skills needed, including technology.

Nonetheless, the vast majority of the public (90 percent), teachers (94 percent) and business executives (93 percent) believe schools need to teach this package of skills, even in the context of other challenges facing education. Two-thirds believe it is realistic to expect K-12 schools to integrate the new skills by:

- building the teaching of these skills into all classes (65 percent);
- adding 21st century skills to curriculum standards (64 percent); and
- making these skills part of the core curriculum taught in schools (64 percent).

Teachers were more likely than business executives to think that schools are doing a good or excellent job of teaching these skills (62 percent versus 38 per-



cent). Teachers, however, were willing to step up their efforts. Seven in ten teachers would support getting core information about how to teach these skills. Four in ten say they would volunteer their time to work with youth after school.

WHAT ROLE CAN COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS PLAY?

A majority of those polled believe that it could be very effective to teach these skills outside of school by:

- complementing what happens in schools by teaching these skills in programs outside of school hours (51 percent); and
- providing all young people with access to high-quality after-school and summer programs that include these skills (59 percent).

Parents and educational institutions (K-12 and higher education) are clearly

seen as the primary sources of learning. On a ten-point scale, 94 percent gave parents a nine or ten. Schools, both K-12 and institutions of higher education, were also seen as key sources of learning.

The public also expressed confidence in other organizations. While the poll did not ask about community institutions such as libraries, museums or community centers, it is noteworthy that after-school and summer programs, like religious institutions and places of employment, are seen as important albeit secondary places to learn 21st century skills.

One might wonder why after-school programs are not seen as a more central solution. Recent poll data from the After-school Alliance may shed some light on this question.³

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³ *An Ongoing Look at Afterschool Programs.* Lake Snell Perry and Associates/TheTarrance Group (2002).

on the ground SCHOOL/COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS IN SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

“In 1994, CS² brought to Springfield individuals who were fully empowered to think and act out of the box. Today...these entrepreneurs are significant allies in my campaign for proficiency as we build a culture of achievement in an active and reform-minded district.”

— Joseph Burke, Superintendent of Schools, Springfield, Massachusetts

Communities and Schools for Career Success (CS²) is a “blurring the lines” strategy designed to galvanize communities in order to increase the capacity of school districts to meet the needs of their students.¹ In

¹ The initiative is currently operating under the name Communities and Schools for Career Success in MA and CA, but for purposes of national expansion the new name of the initiative will be SUCCESS (Schools and Communities for Student Success).

research update, continued

When asked what is the most important thing after-school programs provide children today, 42 percent of those polled said “keeping kids safe and out of trouble.” Skill building — academic, social, physical, creativity — was mentioned by less than 15 percent of respondents.

Interestingly, however, when asked how likely they would be to support after-school programs if the programs achieved certain outcomes, respondents were as likely to be swayed by the prospect of increased school completion and grades as they were by reductions in crime, substance abuse and teen pregnancy.

The difference between these two sets of responses to questions about the role after-school programs play is indicative of a larger problem that will have to be addressed if community organizations are ever to be viewed as real partners in providing skill-building opportunities to children and youth. Community organizations are welcomed educational partners when their role is to support learning by ensuring young people are safe and ready to learn. They are not yet seen as real partners in expanding learning opportunities. ■

every CS² community — there are now seven in Massachusetts and five in California — a skilled team of change agents called “school/community entrepreneurs” work on the ground to build relationships and broker opportunities, bringing insight, experience and resources to the table to help districts meet the challenges they face.

Entrepreneurs are innovators, problem solvers and communicators who work with schools, families and community organizations to transform the educational experience for all students, especially the most disadvantaged. The entrepreneur teams are charged with carrying out innovative strategies and activities that are identified in partnership with local actors — school administrators, community partners and business leaders.

Springfield, Massachusetts, a struggling urban district facing significant challenges, was among the original four CS² communities identified in 1993 when the Corporation for Business Work and Learning (now the Commonwealth Corporation) received a planning grant from the DeWitt Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund (now the Wallace Foundation). Though the district had a history of cooperation between schools and businesses, community agencies and parents, it, like most other districts, lacked the dedicated capacity and resources necessary to take full advantage of community involvement. Since then, entrepreneurs have played a wide range of critical roles in the district, and have assumed a critical “insider/outsider” niche.

According to Pat Spradley, Chief Administrator for Career and Workforce Development and a member of the original team of entrepreneurs, “When the superintendent decided to make us district administrators, we feared we could be pigeon-holed within the system as outsiders. But being in that position gave us a kind of leverage we really didn’t think we’d have, the opportunity to operate both inside and outside the system simultaneously.”

When the CS² collaboration was initiated in 1993, the partnership agreed to focus on four goals:

1. Establishing new initiatives and leveraging funding for far-reaching school reform efforts and programs for at-risk youth;
2. Developing and implementing a comprehensive career exploration and development system including internships, career pathways and summer work-based learning;
3. Creating strong, reform-minded partnerships between community-based agencies, employers and public schools; and
4. Promoting curriculum and teacher training aimed at achieving higher academic standards through hands-on, community-based experiences.

In support of these goals, several activities have been undertaken by the entrepreneur team in Springfield. All of Springfield’s major employers have been engaged in providing quality career and academic experiences such as job shadowing, portfolio development, internships and mentorships for middle and high school youth. The portfolio development process is something that every 8th grader in the district participates in as they work with their teachers and families to choose a high school that will meet their academic and career interests. CS² initiated a “summer of work and learning” program — now a model for the state — that combines jobs, academic remediation and project-based learning for youth considered at-risk. CS² has also played a key role in recruiting and supporting community members as mentors and tutors for students who need assistance passing the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). And utilizing a variety of funding sources, CS² developed, grew and now helps support a network of 57 youth-serving community-based organizations that foster new programs and services for Springfield youth.

RESULTS

After eight years of sustained effort, the CS² Springfield partnership has contributed to notable local improvements:

- The MCAS success rate in English rose from 43 percent in

continued ▶

voices from the fields

**A FORUM INTERVIEW WITH
JEAN THOMASES, SENIOR CONSULTANT**

Forum: You have been involved in a range of efforts to blur the lines between school and community learning over the years, from your early work with Good Shepherd to the New York City Beacons and, more recently, as a senior consultant to AED working on the Carnegie High Schools for a New Society initiative. Tell us about how you got started.

JT: I started as a teacher in middle school and then preschool and eventually moved into a community-based setting working with a CBO that brought its resources to partner with the schools. The thinking then was that these were parallel structures that had to be integrated on behalf of children. Good Shepherd Services ran a range of day treatment, prevention and counseling programs. We worked hard to collaborate with the schools but we really didn't address whether we had expertise that related to education.

on the ground, continued

1998 to 60 percent in 2002; in math, it rose from 63 percent to 83 percent.

- Seventy percent of tenth grade students who failed the statewide assessment in English and 58 percent who failed in math in 2002 passed the retest after many participated in CS² tutoring programs.

- The percentage of Springfield students taking the SAT rose from 45 percent in 1995 to 51 percent in 2000.

- Over the past eight years, more than \$625,000 in new program funds has been raised annually.

While CS² partnerships are designed to support all students, the power of the approach may lie in its ability to reach and reconnect students that are disenfranchised from the educational process. According to Janet Daisley, Senior Program Manager at the Commonwealth Corporation, "they are connecting kids who might otherwise fall through the cracks into community and work-based learning placements, at the same time that they support them academically. This parallel approach is a great way to catch kids and re-engage them in their education." ■

Both my personal philosophy and the work of the organization began to shift in 1980 when Good Shepherd was asked by the mayor's office to create South Brooklyn Community High School (SBCHS). For 22 years SBCHS operated in an off-site location as a program of a large comprehensive high school. Even though the board of education remained the legal evaluator of the teachers, the agency had overall responsibility for integrating support and leadership opportunities into the overall experience of the students and for encouraging teachers to offer a rigorous instructional program.

In 2000, Good Shepherd built a multi-million dollar facility for the school and, in 2002, the school became a free-standing New York City high school. The reality is that while we were a program, we constantly struggled to have a voice in the educational program and were largely unsuccessful. Once we became an independent school, there was a clear message from the department that this was a joint enterprise. The agency was involved in selecting the principal and teachers and the school began to build a learning environment based on the integration of youth development principles and rigorous pedagogy. We learned that for real blurring to occur, there needs to be some formal structure to support it. External organizations must demonstrate their capacity to contribute to the creation of an effective learning environment and the formal educational system must acknowledge that is one of the ways they're willing to do business.

Forum: Talk about blurring the lines in the context of the New York City Beacons.

JT: The Beacons were a community development model designed to bring services and programs to the surrounding community as well as work directly with the host school. In its community development role, it worked with all young people in the neighborhood (ages 5–21) and their families. At the same time, as a permanent resident in the host school, the most effective Beacons established strong working alliances with school

staff. This meant designing specific activities to support the educational program as well as pushing the school to think of itself as a community resource.

As the relationships matured, Beacons began to be seen as part of the school and both the educational and agency staff began to experience a blurring of the lines.

Forum: You've now moved into more national work and have begun to focus on systems change.

JT: One of my first national efforts was documenting the range of CBO schools that exist around the country and disseminating that in a book published by the AED Center for Youth Development.

In terms of systems change, the vision driving the reform work I'm involved in is that you must increase the supports that are operationalized within learning environments and you must increase connections to community. Explicit assumptions about the value of blurring the lines are embedded in the core principles of what makes for a good small school.

It's hard work. Educators can be defensive about their turf as boundaries get blurred. At the same time they're being encouraged to create connections, they've got mandates pushing them to tighten the boundaries. The standards movement coupled with the pressures of No Child Left Behind are pushing the system back to basics and to what it considers its primary functions rather than encouraging connections and partnerships. It is also challenging for CBOs. Many continue to think of themselves as providing add-on services, but with no real legitimacy in thinking about creating effective learning environments. They don't necessarily know what they know about education.

Forum: When schools do embrace these connections in a way that begins to influence teaching and learning, does it change the way schools look for partners?

JT: There's a continuum. Some understand that they want real partners and look for that from the get-go. A new school in New York City has a local museum as its partner;

continued ►

on the ground, continued

while initially the principal saw this as a supplement, he has come to view it as a significant educational resource. Then there are those who want community organizations to help with recruitment, difficult families or after-school programming; they have a list of add-ons. Then at the far end you have those who really don't want a partner at all but may be required to have one.

Requiring partnerships from the beginning can encourage blurring boundaries. Starting a school is such an overwhelming activity that it pushes people along the continuum because they realize they can't do it alone. They begin to see the expertise that is present and draw upon it. The challenges are whether that's done in a way that creates real integration and figuring out how to support those who want to move in that direction but are not sure how.

Forum: Who sits at the table with K-12 education? Where is the center of gravity on the community side?

JT: Mayoral leadership and a cross-agency structure made up of youth services, arts and culture, employment, health, business. If you have some sort of structure, you begin to develop some real parameters that legitimize these kinds of relationships — ground rules consistent with labor agreements, educational priorities, etc.

The broader the tent the better. Creating a more inclusive table can contribute to partnerships being supported and sustained. Beyond privately supported school start-up monies, there are no public funding streams to support this kind of integration.

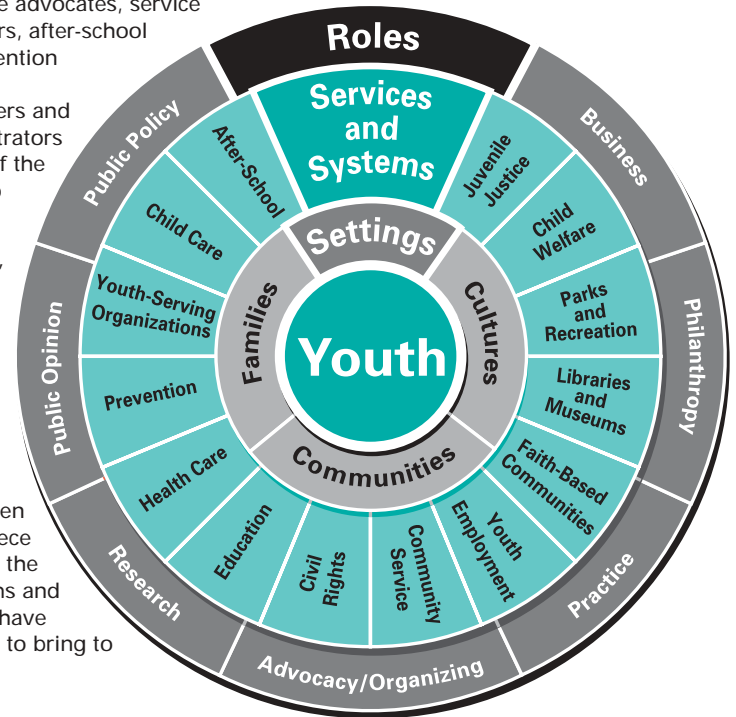
Forum: As we try to engage educators and the public on this idea of blurring the lines, how important is the pitch? Are we expanding learning opportunities or increasing developmental supports?

JT: I talk about both expanded learning and positive development, but learning has to be there. You can't get into the conversation without it. The primary purpose of blurring the boundaries has to be about improved outcomes for young people, such as graduation from high school and post secondary planning, as well as personal and social development and civic participation. ■

THE ALLIED YOUTH FIELDS

The "allied youth fields" is an optimistic term we use to describe the complex space where child welfare advocates, service learning researchers, after-school practitioners, prevention specialists, youth development funders and education administrators all intersect. One of the Forum's goals is to blur the lines between these various "subfields" in order to maximize resources, align policies and link agendas.

This issue of *Forum Focus* zooms in on the connections between the "education" piece of this picture with the many other systems and organizations that have valuable resources to bring to the learning table.



key resources **BLURRING THE LINES**

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