
Going the Extra Mile: Afterschool in Continuation High School Settings

By Sam Piha and Laura Karosic, *Temescal Associates*

Introduction

In this article, we focus on the potential of afterschool programs to serve the multiple needs of older youth in California continuation high school settings. We begin by offering an overview of continuation high schools in California. We next provide a description of afterschool programs currently operating using the 21st CLC funds. We rely on an interview with a program supervisor who oversees several programs in the Bay Area and a survey of programs across the state, which we conducted as part of our research. The reader can view a case study of one program and interviews we conducted at two different afterschool programs at continuation high schools at the link below. The link also includes access to research, resources on continuation schools, and two videos produced by a Bay Area afterschool program serving older youth in a continuation high school setting: <http://www.temescalassociates.com/resources/hsresourcescontinuation.asp>

Overview of Continuation High Schools in California

Continuation high schools have been in operation in the state of California since 1919 as a mandated alternative for students who needed a more flexible schedule, particularly for working students (California Continuation Education Association, 2010). Now, continuation high schools serve a more varied population – youth who are facing credit deficiencies and other life challenges that make participation in a traditional high school program incompatible with their unique needs. (See below, Unique Features of Youth.)

Since 1965, California state law mandates that school districts enrolling over 100 seniors make continuation high school programs available as an alternative route for vulnerable youth to receive a high school diploma. Today, continuation high schools enroll over 70,000 young people ages 16-18 in 525 continuation high schools across California, according to the California Department of Education's latest data from the 2008-2009 school year (California Department of Education [CDE] News Release, 2010).



Graduation requirements at continuation high schools are roughly the same as those at comprehensive high schools. At the local level, continuation high schools have a considerable degree of autonomy, and therefore are variable in terms of their quality, structure, and outcomes (de Velasco et al, 2008).

Unique Features of Continuation Youth

Continuation high schools serve a very vulnerable group of young people who are often considered at-risk because of various challenges in their lives, including family disruption, mental health issues, substance abuse, violence and aggression, and other nonacademic barriers (de Velasco et al, 2008). Many youth arrive behind in the credits needed for graduation, lacking fundamental academic and organizational skills, and are disengaged from school, their communities, and positive adult role models.

Whether they enroll in the continuation school voluntarily or involuntarily, nearly all continuation youth enroll to make up for credit deficiencies that have resulted from repeat bouts with truancy, dropping out, and/or family relocation. For many youth, their goal is to make up for lost credits as quickly as they can, and then move on.

The California Healthy Kids Survey (2006) found that continuation youth were three times more likely than youth in comprehensive high schools to be in foster care or living with a relative other than a parent. Because of frequent changes in foster home placements or family moves, these youth are a very transient population (de Velasco et al, 2008). This has implications for school structure and student learning, which is discussed further below.

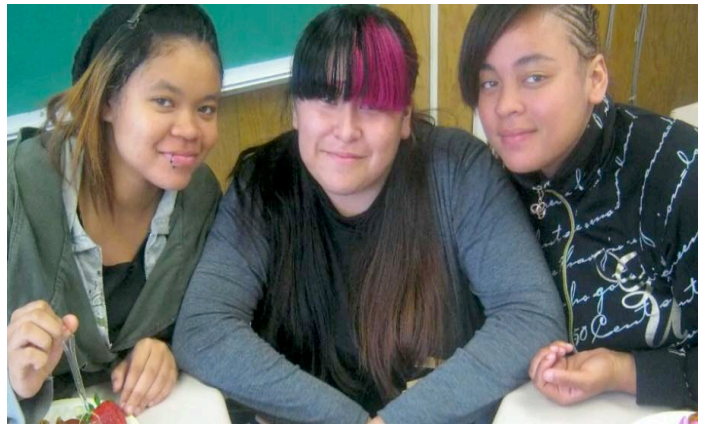
This study also found that rates of alcohol and drug use and involvement in violent behavior are higher among continuation school youth. They are also more likely to have been a member of a gang and physically threatened in and out of school than youth at comprehensive high schools (de Velasco et al, 2008). Continuation high schools also serve a higher concentration of English Language Learners and ethnic and racial minorities (de Velasco et al, 2008).

Unique Features of Continuation Schools

Given the unique characteristics and needs of the youth population at continuation high schools, the schools that serve them must be ready to provide appropriate opportunities and support. The features of continuation schools vary across the state. Some schools have large, modern facilities, committed staff, strong community partnerships, and rigorous instruction. Other schools are small, under resourced, and lack strong administration and staff leadership.

“The most successful schools have great principals and teachers that bring support to the youth that is a mixture of authority, partnership, and humbleness.” - Paola Zuniga, Manager of High School Programs, BACR

Despite these differences, continuation schools have a certain amount of flexibility and autonomy when it comes to scheduling and curriculum. They are only obligated to teach four hours per day on the four core subjects. According to the California Department of Education, continuation high schools aim to provide occupational/work-study education, individualized instructional strategies, intensive guidance and counseling, and flexible school schedules to meet student needs (CDE News Release, 2010).



However, not all schools achieve these aims and many do not have the resources or will to serve the needs of their students.

While there are some exceptions, most continuation high schools are small and located on separate campuses. Thus, they do not have the extensive facilities and resources of the larger, comprehensive high schools. As a result, they often lack gyms, kitchens, and libraries. At many of these schools, classroom space is at a premium.

Attendance is also an issue in these schools. High rates of truancy and drop-outs are already established problems by the time a youth enters a continuation high school. As mentioned above, continuation high school youth are a transient group and they are more likely to change schools frequently. This gives continuation schools a narrow period of time to make a lasting impact on youth and often classes are not designed to offer long-term skill building.

Unique Features of Continuation Staff

Another unique aspect of continuation high schools lies in their staffing structure. While some continuation high schools are large, most are small and have limited school personnel and staff. As a result, staff members, including principals, are often responsible for performing many different roles and functions.

The motivation of continuation high school staff is highly variable. Some principals are at the end of their careers and some of the teaching staff appear worn out from being in these settings for a number of years. According to one afterschool program leader, there are also schools that “have great principals and teachers that bring support to the youth that is a mixture of authority, partnership, and humbleness.”

Youth Voices

These statements are from afterschool program participants we interviewed at a continuation high school.

"[The school] has low expectations. Except for one teacher. He's real cool. He can relate."

"The teachers don't care about students here. They don't teach. They just hand out worksheets."

"The principal is really cool. He hired afterschool teachers into the school that looked like us. We needed people who understood where we were coming from... The principal saw what we needed and got it for us."

"They don't make us work hard enough. We need to be challenged. But some students fail themselves by not taking advantage of what little there is here."

In one Bay Area continuation high school, most students skip first period and use fifth period as a time for "backfill." Their afterschool program has more or less absorbed 5th period, where youth have the opportunity to participate in Cyber High, an online course to do work, gain extra credit, and receive tutoring. Sixth period is used for enrichment activities, such as music and beats, video editing, urban art, sports, and cosmetology. Saturdays are used for driver's education, leadership training, and field trips.



The Role and Shape of Afterschool Programs

Afterschool programs that are located in continuation schools are operating in a unique environment. These schools are often small and under resourced and operate only four periods per day. They serve a population of older youth with high levels of need. Many of these youth face a number of challenges in their lives and are often highly disengaged, having failed in and been failed by the traditional school system. These youth clearly need more – more caring adults who know them, more ways to complete the requirements for graduation, and more preparation for life after high school. Afterschool programs are well positioned to help this population of youth as well as the continuation schools that work to serve them.

Academic Supports

The primary focus of continuation schools and the youth that attend them is the attainment of a high school diploma. In surveying 16 afterschool programs across California, we learned that nearly all programs offer a bevy of academic supports. (To see a complete summary of the survey, go to http://www.temescalassociates.com/documents/resources/continuation/Continuation_HS_Survey_Report.pdf). These supports include instruction and/or remediation, the utilization of credentialed teachers, tutoring, homework help, preparation for the high school exit exam, and the opportunity to collect and recover credits for graduation.

Supporting the Transition to the Real World After High School

Older youth in continuation high schools are keenly aware of the world that awaits them beyond high school. When asked, many say their greatest interests are in preparing themselves for the world of work and the opportunity to make money. Afterschool programs that provide opportunities to develop workforce skills and obtain placement in work-based internships are very popular among youth.

Two thirds of the continuation afterschool programs we surveyed teach work-force skills, two-thirds partner with district Regional Occupational Programs (ROPs), and a third of them offer youth employment opportunities within the actual program. Developing internship placements and opportunities to learn valuable work skills requires the development of relationships and partnerships with businesses and work settings in the nearby community.

"The afterschool program is actually teaching us things. They get us ready for college and we earn extra credits. It's helping me get a job."
– Afterschool participants at a continuation high school



Developing and institutionalizing an internship program was a focus of the afterschool program at Ralph J. Bunche Academy, which is detailed in the case study that follows this section. These partnerships often include community colleges. Eighty percent of the continuation afterschool programs we surveyed have partnerships with their local community colleges. Some of these partnerships are designed to help young people build bridges to enrollment in a community college.

Other afterschool programs offer college tours and assist young people and their families in applying to local four-year colleges.

The other ways youth are connected with their communities beyond the school involves community service and volunteer opportunities. Eighty-percent of the programs we surveyed offer community service and volunteer opportunities for their youth. Career preparation classes included cosmetology and hairstyling, video editing, urban art design, welding, and a green construction program.

Youth Development and Enrichment

Older youth, including those in continuation high schools, are ready to assume leadership opportunities. Nearly all of the programs we surveyed offer leadership opportunities for youth and two thirds describe their program as “student-driven.”

A number of program leaders talked about the importance of sports to not only provide opportunities for physical activity, but also as a way to build school spirit. Sports also teach the lessons of teamwork and offer mentoring that happens between a coach and his or her players and among the youth themselves. This is beautifully captured by the afterschool program at Ralph J. Bunche Academy. This video can be viewed using the link below:

<http://www.temescalassociates.com/resources/hsresourcescontinuation.asp>

One afterschool program created a sports league with other continuation schools. Each team received new uniforms, a team name, and mascot. The program hosted a tournament with other continuation school teams, which helped to build the young peoples’ attachment to their schools. Basketball, soccer, conditioning, and other physical education classes are also offered at afterschool programs in continuation high schools.



Another program created the “Life After High School” Conference, which showcased programs offered at local community colleges. This weekend event was sponsored in partnership with the local community college district and was attended by over one hundred and twenty youth.

Implications for Program Implementation, Technical Assistance, and Policy

Afterschool programs serving continuation high school youth are still very much under the radar. In fact, it was very difficult to assemble a database of these programs, as few leaders at the state or regional levels were aware of which afterschool grantees were operating at continuation schools.

The first task that is needed is raising awareness and the knowledge of existing programs and any available evidence of their effectiveness. We believe that these programs have the opportunity to greatly advance the outcomes of these forgotten youth and the schools that serve them. Below are a few implications for program implementation, technical assistance, and related policy.

Program Implementation

As described above, continuation high schools have a number of unique characteristics: They are generally smaller in size, under resourced in terms of available school personnel and facilities to support learning, and offer instruction for only four periods. In addition, they serve a group of high risk, transient youth who also have variable schedules, depending on what credits they need to graduate and whether or not they are enrolled in independent study.

To learn more about program implementation, we conducted an extensive interview with Paola Zuniga, a staff person at Bay Area Community Resources and supervisor overseeing several afterschool programs in continuation schools. Ms. Zuniga emphasized that the above characteristics offer both opportunities and challenges for those implementing an afterschool program.



In her experience, afterschool programs in continuation schools and school personnel must work closely together if they are to be successful in helping youth achieve their goals of graduation. In the case of her programs, it took program leaders a full year to win the trust of the school and fashion the programs into an extended day model. In the second year, program leaders focused their efforts on improving the quality of academic support, including providing support for the high school exit exam, tutoring, and college tours.

According to Ms. Zuniga, it is very helpful if the afterschool program can create a system by which school day teachers can communicate regularly with afterschool staff, send them the students' weekly homework packets, and identify youth who are falling behind and would most benefit from attending the program. Ms. Zuniga also found that bringing in academic tutors from outside of the afterschool program helped improve students' academic outcomes. By the end of the second year, her programs were given full license to operate the school's 5th period as their own.

"SSShhhhhhhh! The students don't know the difference between day school and afterschool – we want to keep it that way!" – Ms. Q, a continuation school day teacher.

Ms. Zuniga observed that many continuation high schools and their students lack a sense of "school spirit" and positive attachment to the school itself. She suggested that this is in part due to the lack of afterschool sports teams. To address this deficit, the afterschool program leaders worked to improve the quality and professionalism of the sports teams. Teams were provided with brand new uniforms, a mascot, and the opportunity to participate in weekend tournaments with other continuation high schools. Taking sports to this new level of seriousness attracted many youth to the afterschool program who might otherwise not have joined.

Technical Assistance

Afterschool programs in continuation high school settings would be served by efforts to bring them together to exchange promising practices with their peers. In regards to technical assistance content, when surveyed, continuation afterschool program leaders named the following topics as their highest priorities:

1. Program strategies to employ youth;
2. Support for recent graduates;
3. Opportunities for community service and volunteerism;
4. Accessing multiple funding streams, and;
5. Partnerships with community colleges.

According to Ms. Zuniga, afterschool staff must be aware of the challenges that are often presented in working in these settings. This must be addressed in their training and supervision.

Policy

The expectations regarding program attendance, adult-to-student ratio, and cost per student should be amended for programs operating in continuation high schools. This is because they serve a higher concentration of high-risk youth, there are fewer resources afforded by the school, or the school structure and schedule is very different than a comprehensive high school. There should be a focused attempt to coordinate other relevant funding streams that target high-risk youth and which could bring supplemental services to the youth and the program. This includes funding that promotes healthy choices, the prevention of high-risk behavior, mental and physical health, career preparation, college access, etc.

Because of the “last chance” nature that these settings represent, it is important that these afterschool programs work very closely, almost merging with the continuation school.

This “extended day” way of working could be easily misinterpreted as using the afterschool resources to supplant the responsibilities of the regular school day. It is recommended that policies are in place that do not penalize stakeholders in developing a closely aligned, extended day model.

Finally, there should be efforts to build bridges between the programs that serve continuation high school youth and those that serve young adults who are 19 years and older – youth who were formally considered high-risk and disconnected. Often, young people beyond the age of 18 are no longer supported by local programs. As a result, the only systems that exist for these youth are ones that come into play after they’ve gotten in trouble. A good example of a positive program supporting young adults is the Special Foundation Course and separate learning communities that exist at Los Positas Community College in Livermore, CA. This course and subsequent learning community provides extra support to high risk, disengaged youth who entered the college, many from continuation high schools.

Photos courtesy of Garfield High School, Ocean Shores High School, Laney College’s Machine and Technology Program, and Ralph J. Bunche Academy.

About Temescal Associates

www.temescalassociates.com

This article was authored by Sam Piha and Laura Karosic of Temescal Associates with support from the William T. Grant Foundation. Temescal Associates is dedicated to building the capacity of leaders and organizations in education and youth development who are serious about improving the lives of young people. Temescal Associates clients include leaders of youth serving institutions and organizations, school and youth program practitioners, public and private funders, intermediary organizations, and policy makers. Temescal’s work ranges from helping clients build large-scale youth and community initiatives to supporting those who provide services to young people on a day-to-day basis. To accomplish this, Temescal Associates draws on a pool of gifted and highly experienced consultants who excel at eliciting the internal knowledge and wisdom of those we work with while introducing new knowledge and strategies that can transform the day-to-day practices that lead to improved youth

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For additional resources on afterschool programs within continuation high schools and other high school settings, please visit www.temescalassociates.com

CASE STUDY: THE SPOT PROGRAM AT RALPH J. BUNCHE ACADEMY

Ralph J. Bunche Academy is located in Oakland, California and is one of 52 high schools in Oakland Unified School District. It is a continuation high school that serves 258 students in grades 9 through 12. Fifty-nine percent of the school's student population are African Americans; 35% are Hispanic; 5% are Asian/Pacific Islander; and 2% are Caucasian.

Bay Area Community Resources (BACR) is the lead agency for the afterschool program at Ralph Bunche. The SPOT (Supporting Positive Opportunities for Teens) afterschool program is entering its 4th year of operation and gets the majority of its funding from the ASSETs 21st Century CLC grant. The program serves an average of 60-65 young people per day.

Introduction

This case study focuses on the efforts of the afterschool staff at Ralph Bunche Academy to respond to youth interest in acquiring job skills and the means to earn an income. *Project Mentor* is a new program offering vocational training and internship placements for seniors at the afterschool program. The program is designed to equip seniors with skills that help prepare them for life after high school. Within *Project Mentor*, youth conduct career research, participate in internships and community service, meet with mentors to develop career goals, and create career portfolios, complete with resumes, cover letters, and reference pages.

In addition to the *Project Mentor* component, the afterschool program offers a number of enrichment activities, including basketball, soccer, music and beats, urban art, cosmetology, hairstyling, and weight conditioning. The program also offers academic support, including tutoring and Cyber High, an online class format where youth can study, take classes and earn credits.

Challenge of Continuation High School Settings

In working to establish their program, the SPOT afterschool staff faced a number of challenges that are common to programs that operate within continuation high school settings. Unlike regular comprehensive high schools, Ralph Bunche did not have existing afterschool clubs in place, which meant afterschool staff did not have a base of youth from which to recruit. Though the school's attendance goal is 250, only about 100 youth actually attend on an average day, making the pool of youth they had to reach even smaller.



Additionally, many youth came to Ralph Bunche to get graduation credits and move on, resulting in a large turnover of young people. A number of youth had other obligations after the school day ended, including jobs and parental responsibilities. There were also concerns among youth that staying at their non-neighborhood afterschool program would subject them to crossing through different gang territories after dark.

Given the above challenges, afterschool staff knew that they needed to offer engaging learning opportunities if they were to attract youth to stay afterschool. They gave youth assessments to learn about their needs and interests and found that acquiring job skills and earning money were top priorities among many of them. Additionally, afterschool staff found out by word of mouth from recent graduates that many of them felt unprepared for life after high school.

Alignment with the School

Continuation schools are usually much smaller than comprehensive high schools. Thus, the afterschool program must be prepared to work with the school day in an integrated fashion. To be successful, afterschool staff must work closely with the school administration and personnel.

To enlist the support of the Ralph Bunche school administration, the afterschool staff drew up a proposal of the *Project Mentor* program and presented it to the principal. The principal was asked to agree to a number of terms listed in the proposal, including: making *Project Mentor* a requirement for graduation next year; referring 15 seniors to the program every marking period (6 weeks); allowing seniors to create and present a career portfolio as their senior project; and placing all short-day seniors into the 5th period *Project Mentor* program.

The afterschool staff's efforts to help youth with their homework served to strengthen relationships with the school day teachers. Afterschool staff worked closely and met frequently with the senior teacher and collaborated on the required senior projects. Afterschool staff also enlisted the support of the ROP (Regional Occupation Program) coordinator at the school, who provided them with contacts at local community-based organizations that would accept student interns.

Partnering with Community Organizations and Role Models

Continuation high schools serve a large number of youth who are disengaged from their communities, including organizations and positive role models. The role of afterschool programs can include building bridges between youth and their communities, particularly those settings that offer work experience and employment.

The afterschool staff conducted outreach to community-based organizations to place youth in internship positions at their sites. Through meetings and email communications, the afterschool staff partnered with Youth Radio, The Scotland Center, and Oakland Parks and Recreation. Fifteen youth from the first cohort of *Project Mentor* interned at Defremery Park in Oakland, where they organized and staffed community events. *Project Mentor* staff also worked with Bay Area Community Resources (BACR) to establish youth internships at elementary afterschool programs.



Engaging Youth

As stated above, high school age youth are difficult to attract to programs afterschool, especially youth in continuation high schools.

To recruit youth to *Project Mentor*, the SPOT afterschool staff worked closely with the administration and teachers. They conducted classroom presentations and a school-wide assembly to introduce the program. When word spread among youth that the program was offering jobs, many students signed up.

The SPOT afterschool staff implemented the *Project Mentor* component in January 2010.

Over the course of four months, youth in the program created career portfolios, conducted job research, met with their mentors to receive feedback on their portfolios, and visited local businesses relating to their area of interest. Youth also were required to successfully complete 3 job applications, participate in mock interviews, and develop a 2-year plan for their future career goals.

Graduating seniors participating in *Project Mentor* were required to complete a few additional tasks. They presented a PowerPoint presentation of their career plan as their senior project and participated in college enrollment and scholarship workshops.

In the third week of the program, youth were matched up with mentors who worked in a profession of interest to the youth. Mentors included a music producer, a registered nurse, a case manager, and a social worker.

Those youth who showed “outstanding performance” (consistent program attendance and participation) were awarded a hands-on, paid internship. The SPOT afterschool staff worked to match youth with organizations related to their interests. Youth were also given the opportunity to participate in community service activities to gain important hands-on job skills.

Early Results of *Project Mentor*

The *Project Mentor* program was a very successful component of the larger SPOT afterschool program. Fifty youth graduated from the program in the first 6 months. Youth left the program with new job skills, employment and community service experience, and an increased awareness of available choices and the benefits of long-term planning. Youth also left with career portfolios complete with a resume, cover letter, and references, a 2-year action plan, a letter grade and 2.5 credits, and the successful completion of 3 job applications.

Project Mentor was so successful that several youth who completed the program wanted to come back and serve as a mentor or big brother/big sister to new students. Teachers who saw the value of *Project Mentor* began working with youth who were not enrolled in the afterschool program to create resumes and cover letters as part of their classroom work. Thanks to a strong relationship between the senior teacher and the afterschool staff, the principal agreed to host a school-wide community day for seniors to present their career plans. A video on the *Project Mentor* program was aired at this school-wide event. It can be viewed online at:

<http://www.temescalassociates.com/resources/hsresourcescontinuation.asp>

It was the afterschool staff’s goal to incorporate the job training and career exploration components into the school culture by making it a graduation requirement. Afterschool staff are currently working with the principal to institutionalize the *Project Mentor* component by including it in the registration packet and master curriculum.

Next year (2010-11), *Project Mentor* will consist of six weeks of job training and career exploration and six weeks of full-time internships. Afterschool staff also plan to partner with the Public Health Department to set up 20 internships for Ralph Bunche youth.



This case study was written by Sam Piha and Laura Karosic of Temescal Associates (www.temescalassociates.com) The authors would like to thank the Partnership for Children and Youth and the William T. Grant Foundation for their support in this work.

Photos courtesy of the SPOT afterschool program, managed by Bay Area Community Resources, and located at Ralph J. Bunche Academy High School.

Interviews with Continuation School Afterschool Programs

As part of our effort to better understand continuation high school settings and the role of afterschool programs, we visited two continuation schools with 21st Century CLC programs to talk directly with afterschool youth, program staff, and school-day teachers. These interviews do not necessarily represent the entire school or afterschool program. However, they do offer important perspectives and illustrate the variation among school settings. Because they represent only snapshots, we have chosen to keep the names of the schools and those interviewed as anonymous.

Interview with School “A”

School A is a continuation high school that serves about 250 students. Upon approaching the school on the day of the interview, the Site Coordinator was standing outside the campus talking to a number of youth. He introduced us to “Evan,” a graduate of the program last year and a strong participant in the afterschool program. Evan was eager to talk about the afterschool program. We asked him a series of questions, and his responses are below.

Interviewer: *Why did you come to this school?*

Evan: “I was a gang banger. I was causing problems in my other high school. One day they called me into the office and told me I wasn’t welcome at the school anymore and I was being transferred to this school. That made me very angry.”

Interviewer: *Did you have personal goals you wanted to accomplish at this school?*

Evan: “Yes, my goal was to protect my own turf. I spent all my time when not here smoking weed and trying to figure out how I was going to mess up class.”

Interviewer: *In what ways did this school serve your needs?*

Evan: “The principal is really cool. He hired afterschool teachers into the school that looked like us. We needed people who understood where we were coming from. The math teacher helped me a lot—it’s helping me now in my construction job. The principal saw what we needed and got it for us. He saw that we needed school. Just by hiring [the afterschool Site Coordinator] it was 85% better than when I started.”

Interviewer: *Tell me about the afterschool program.*

Evan: “They got us interested in all sorts of things.

Instead of smoking weed and trying to figure out how I was going to mess up the class—I was playing soccer! We had a team with uniforms and played other teams. Running up and down the soccer field made me quit smoking!

“The program didn’t just help us in school, it helped us in life. I learned in the afterschool program how to get my hands dirty. But mainly the staff believed in us.” – Former afterschool participant at School A

The program didn’t just help us in school, it helped us in life. I learned in the afterschool program how to get my hands dirty. But mainly the staff believed in us. They showed us that by spending time with us—you know? They spent their Saturdays and Sundays with us when they could have been spending it with their families. They spent time and that was really important.

We also had the opportunity to talk with Ms. Q, a school day teacher at School A, and the Site Coordinator of the afterschool program at the school. We told them we wanted to ask them some questions about the afterschool program. Ms. Q put her finger to her lips and said, “SSShhhhhhhh! The students don’t know the difference between day school and afterschool – we want to keep it that way!”

Interviewer: *Why are these students here instead of attending a traditional comprehensive high school?*

Ms. Q: “They come to graduate. We are their last stop.”

Site Coordinator: “The most common reasons are: truancy, they were kicked out of their school for behavioral or health issues; some have deep issues with their family; or, they come from the system. We are the only continuation school with special education.”

“We look at where the students want to go and what’s in the way. We really look at how to make our program integrated with the school day. The staff has been really supportive.” – Afterschool Site Coordinator

Interviewer: *Do the students have personal goals they are seeking to accomplish at this school?*

Ms. Q: “To graduate.”

Site Coordinator: “Some have a sense. We help them by creating the ESLR [Expected School-wide Learning Results] blueprints in partnership with the school. We look at where they want to go and what’s in the way. We really look at how to make our program integrated with the school day. The staff has been very supportive.”

Interviewer: *In what ways does this school serve the students’ unique needs?*

Ms. Q: “Well for one thing, we have the afterschool program. We offer different programs, for example counseling. The students choose classes that they want. We have each student complete an ESLR. There are three components: Academic; Life; and School. We give them skills to function as productive citizens.”

Site Coordinator: “They focus on personalized education and programming – addressing what the students want. They are also a great resource for parents.”

Interviewer: *In what ways does this school not serve the students’ unique needs?*

Ms. Q: “We don’t have enough health and preventative workshops. We have a lot of students on drugs and we don’t adequately address that. We need to learn about healthy eating!”

Site Coordinator: “Always an issue of resources and time. The principal pays teachers to do afterschool programming, but the needs are so high. We need books for the machinist class – our ratios need to be 1:4.”

Interviewer: *In what way is the afterschool program supporting the school’s mission? What is the afterschool program offering that a school day does not?*

Ms. Q: “The big thing that the afterschool program does is support the ESLRs. They expose the students to things they haven’t been exposed to. They make actual products so they feel ownership. The kinds of things that they get exposed to and produce a product in are things like: Beats; Fashion; Arts; Drivers Ed; Go Green and the Laney internships.”

Site Coordinator: “An example is our Internship Program. We connect kids to construction and welding and this is the gateway to college. This program keeps kids from dropping out. We also really support teachers and we provide credit recovery.”

Interviewer: *What else is needed in afterschool that would better serve the students’ needs?*

Ms. Q: “There needs to be more creative ways for teachers to be involved. We need more incentives for kids to come to program after lunch. We most definitely need flexible funding. We definitely see school attendance improving. This school is the place to be – the afterschool program must be connected to the school day – and it is here – from the kid’s perspective there is no difference between day school and afterschool.”

Site Coordinator: “We need space! Look at this place – it’s so small. If we just had a gym facility – how do we run basketball on ½ court, how do we run soccer with no field? The partnership between the school district and the city needs to be strengthened.”

“We connect kids to construction and welding and this is the gateway to college. This program keeps kids from dropping out.” – Afterschool Site Coordinator

Interviewer: *How would you describe the mission of the afterschool program?*

Site Coordinator: “Our mission is to graduate students, but we’re not graded on that through the grants – we are doing something different, we have to, but we don’t fit the mold the California Department of Education has cast for us.”

Interview with School “B”

School B is a continuation school that serves over 250 students. The afterschool program at School B is funded by the 21st Century CLC grant. The program serves an average of 60 young people per day and offers academic support classes, including one-on-one tutoring, before-school help, an online credit recovery program, and a job readiness and training program. The program also provides a number of enrichment activities, including music, cosmetology, afterschool sports, digital media, and weight lifting.

The visit to School B began at 1pm and the afterschool program building was bustling with youth. The day before the interview was marked by the funeral of a student who was murdered. The students talked about the event and shared photographs on their phones of the funeral. The afterschool program coordinator stated that there were not many students at school because of events surrounding the shooting.

We spoke with four students who were hanging out with their school day teacher, Mr. M. After much discussion of the student who was killed, the students agreed to answer some questions. Below are their responses.

Interviewer: *Why are you here at this school?*

Youth: “I didn’t want to stay at my other high school;” “My probation officer made me come;” “I stopped going to school for a while.”

Interviewer: *Do you have personal goals you are seeking to accomplish at this school?*

Youth: “Earn credits to graduate;” “Finish school.”

“The kids would be lost without [the afterschool program]. The afterschool staff play with the kids, love them, and listen to them. They can relate to the kids, whereas the teachers in the school cannot.”

- School day teacher

Interviewer: *In what ways does this school serve your needs?*

Youth: (All youth replied that it does not serve their needs.)

Interviewer: *In what ways does this school not serve your needs?*

Youth: “The teachers don’t care about students;” “They don’t teach. They just hand out worksheets;” “They have low expectations. Except for Mr. M [a school day teacher]. He’s real cool. He can relate;” “They don’t make us work hard enough, we need to be challenged – but some students fail themselves by not taking advantage of what little there is here.”

Interviewer: *What do you like about the program?*

Youth: “[The afterschool program] is helping me get a job. Helped me with a resume, job application and references;” “They help us get ready for college. We earn extra credits;” “They actually teach us things.”

Interviewer: *I have a question for Mr. M. What do you think about the afterschool program?*

Mr. M: “The kids would be lost without it. The afterschool staff play with the kids, love them, and listen to them. They can relate to the kids, whereas the teachers in the school cannot. I appreciate the real life application the afterschool program offers. The students here are eager and hungry to learn.”

“The school is credit-driven, not learning-driven....the afterschool program offers more enriching learning experiences.”

- Afterschool staff member

We also talked with the afterschool Site Coordinator and an AmeriCorps member who worked at the afterschool program. Their responses are below.

Interviewer: *Why are these students here instead of attending a traditional comprehensive high school?*

AmeriCorps Member: "To complete credits, many have intense home issues, some are pregnant, many come from juvenile hall."

Site Coordinator: "They have fallen behind in school and behind in credits. They are here to catch up and go back to their home school or graduate from here with 190 credits. Or, no other school will take them."

Interviewer: *Do the students have personal goals they are seeking to accomplish at this school?*

AmeriCorps Member: "The number one goal is to graduate."

Site Coordinator: "Depends on the kid. They either want to finish school/graduate or they don't have a goal."

Interviewer: *In what ways does this school serve the students' unique needs?*

AmeriCorps Member: "They offer credits that they need to graduate, they offer flexible scheduling. An example is that the kids were getting to school late in the morning so they changed the start time from 8:30 to 9:00."

Site Coordinator: "Not well. There is a counselor and a therapist on campus every other Wednesday for one hour. They have really low standards for the students and they let them out early."

Interviewer: *In what ways does this school not serve the students' unique needs?*

AmeriCorps Member: "They are credit driven and not learning driven, so that means that they don't teach. There needs to be more full-time counselors to deal with the multiple issues the youth come with. The teachers have very low expectations for the students."

Site Coordinator: "There is no health clinic, no family planning. A lack of resources in general. There is no special education. We had a resource specialist just come into the school two months ago."

"The afterschool program [at School B] does what the school doesn't do....[it's] a supportive, open place for students."

- Afterschool staff member

Interviewer: *In what way is the afterschool program supporting the school's mission?*

AmeriCorps Member: "We offer classes for credit. We read their transcripts and help them know what they need to do to graduate. They often have 200 credits – but they are usually not the right ones to graduate. We provide work opportunities and have a Resource Center."

Site Coordinator: "We completely support the goals of the school. Maybe accomplish them better than the school."

Interviewer: *What is the afterschool program offering that a school day does not?*

AmeriCorps Member: "More enriching learning experiences. The afterschool staff are more similar to them than the teachers. We spend a lot of time with them on the weekend and going on fieldtrips."

Interviewer: *What else is needed in afterschool that would better serve the students' needs?*

AmeriCorps Member: "More therapists and a supportive principal."

Interviewer: *How would you describe the mission of the afterschool program?*

AmeriCorps Member: "To do what the school doesn't do. Be a supportive, open place for students."

Interviewer: *Can you describe your relationship to the school-day program?*

AmeriCorps Member: "Well, I'm here all day. The school staff ask me to do all the things they don't want to do, so I'm the Prom coordinator, the Year Book coordinator and the Debate teacher. We think we are moving to a case management strategy next year with the kids – get really involved in their lives. I'm young and I want some experience. I want to work with young people."

These interviews were conducted by Stacey Daraio, Senior Temescal Associates and edited by Sam Piha and Laura Karosic, Temescal Associates (www.temescalassociates.com).