Growing Together, Learning Together: Lessons Learned from Building Afterschool Systems in Support of Improved Youth Outcomes

Jennifer Brown Lerner
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Four main questions

- What is the value of out-of-school time (OST)?

- Why take a systems approach?

- What is an OST system?

- What are some of the key elements that support OST systems?

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Value of OST
## *Build critical skills for college, work, and life*

"Recent studies indicate that high-quality, well-managed, and structured Out-of-School-Time opportunities can help youth develop critical academic, social, and emotional attributes and skills, especially if offered consistently and persistently over time."

-- Hours of Opportunity,
The RAND Corporation, 2010
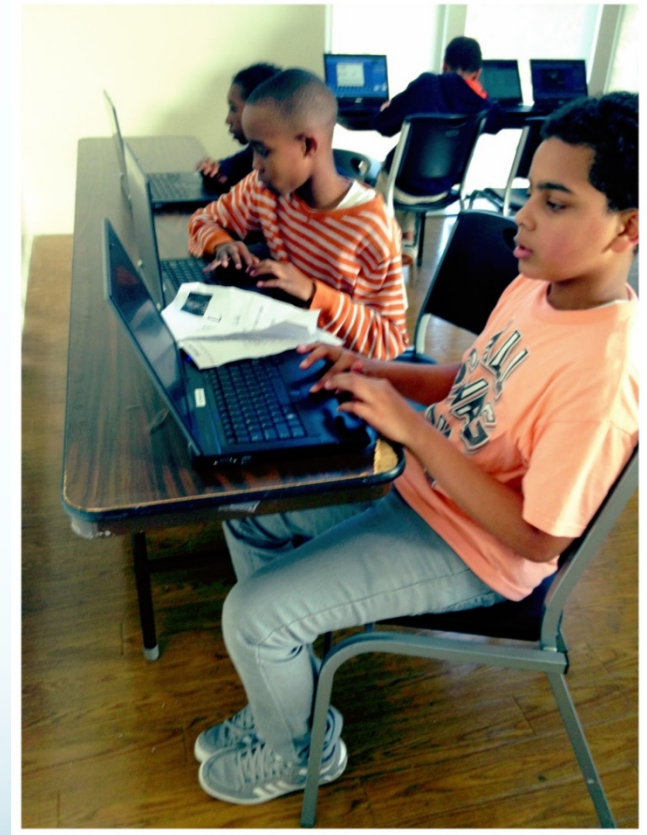
Why a Systems Approach?
1) Ensure equal access
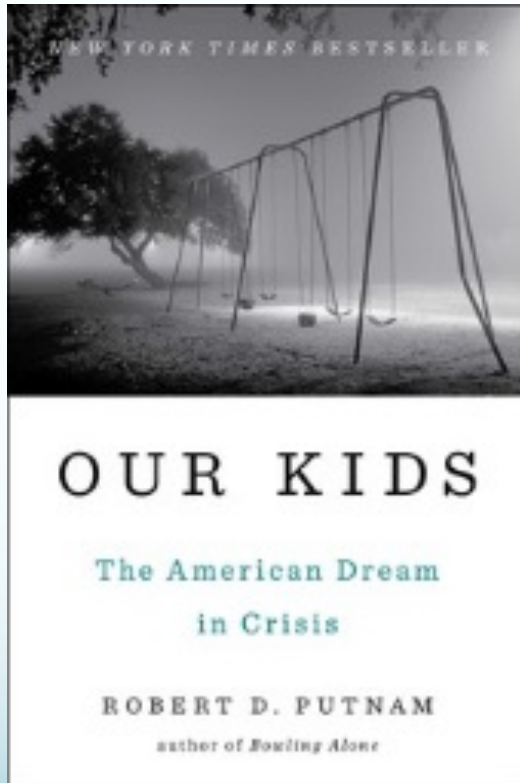
- **Unequal Participation:**
"Poor kids are three times as likely as their non-poor classmates to participate in *neither* sports *nor* clubs (30% vs. 10%)."

- **Widening Gap:** "From 1997-2012, the 'extracurricular gap' between poor kids and non-poor kids
(aged 6-11) nearly doubled."

- Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis, Robert Putnam, 2015

Why a Systems Approach?
2) Ensure high quality

In a 2007 meta-analysis of 73 evaluations, afterschool programs *on average* had positive effects on:

- Attitudes toward school
- Social behavior
- School grades and achievement tests
- Reduced problem behaviors from aggression

But programs *without specific quality features* had NO effect.

"The Impact of Afterschool Programs that
Promote Personal and Social Skills"
Durlak & Weissberg (2007)

Afterschool systems—from fragmentation to integration

BEFORE…
- Waste of city resources
- Uneven program quality
- Fewer children participate
- Public skepticism
- Children lose

CITYWIDE COORDINATION THROUGH AN AFTERSCHOOL SYSTEM

AFTER…
- Smarter use of city resources
- Program quality improves
- More children participate
- Public support
- Children gain

Coordination *can* work

"This initiative provided a proof of principle – that organizations across cities could work together toward increasing access, quality, data-based decision making and sustainability."

-- *Hours of Opportunity,*
The RAND Corporation, 2010

How many cities are coordinating?

A MAJORITY OF CITIES IN THE STUDY COORDINATE AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS

Researchers recruited 129 cities of 100,000 people or more for the study. Of those cities…

77 coordinate afterschool programs

23 don't coordinate

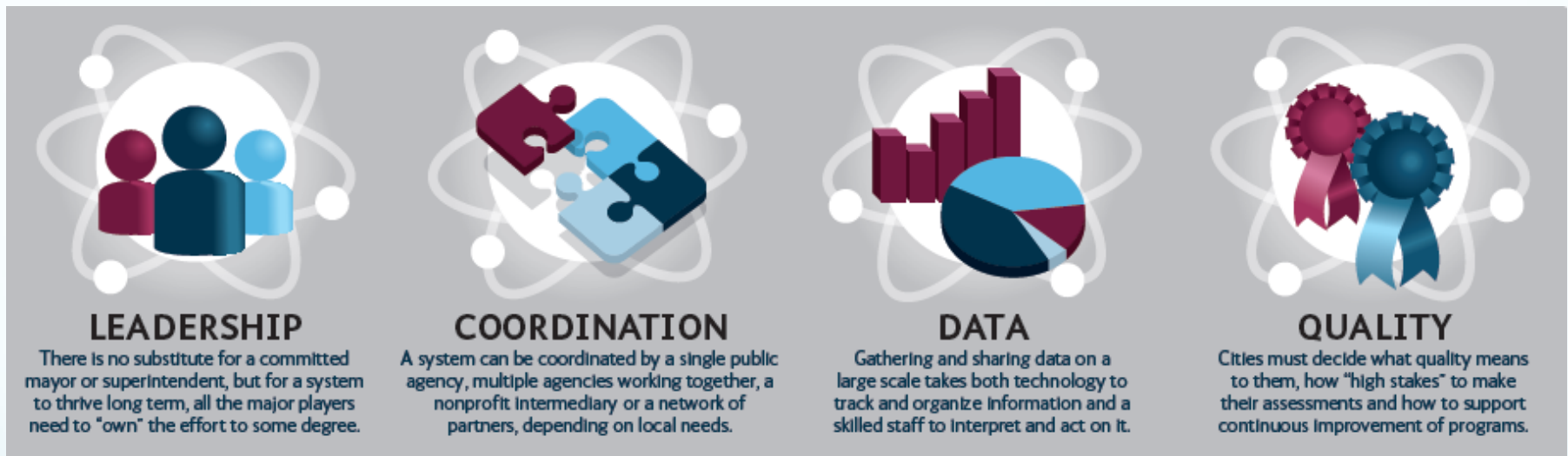**29** could not identify anyone knowledgeable about coordination

From *Is Citywide Afterschool Coordination Going Nationwide? An Exploratory Study in Large Cities* September 2013: fhi360

- More than half of cities surveyed are coordinating afterschool: **59-77 percent**
- Number of agencies, organizations involved in coordination: **median of 20**

The four elements of afterschool system building success

LEADERSHIP
There is no substitute for a committed mayor or superintendent, but for a system to thrive long term, all the major players need to "own" the effort to some degree.

COORDINATION
A system can be coordinated by a single public agency, multiple agencies working together, a nonprofit intermediary or a network of partners, depending on local needs.

DATA
Gathering and sharing data on a large scale takes both technology to track and organize information and a skilled staff to interpret and act on it.

QUALITY
Cities must decide what quality means to them, how "high stakes" to make their assessments and how to support continuous improvement of programs.

From *Growing Together, Learning Together: What Cities Have Discovered about Building Afterschool Systems* July 2015: Wallace Foundation
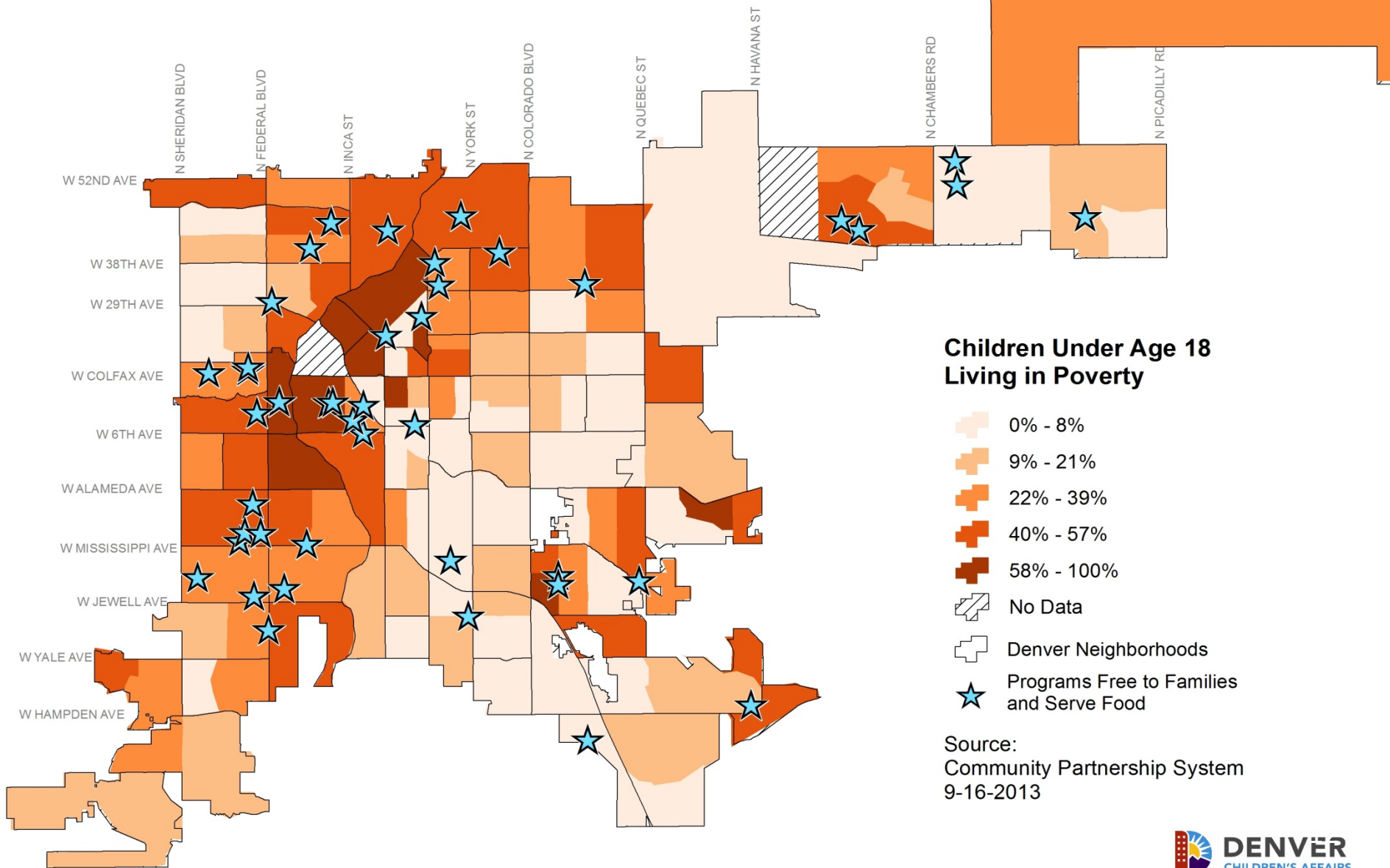
Strong leadership

Coordination that fits local context

Effective use of data

Children Under Age 18 Living in Poverty

- 0% - 8%
- 9% - 21%
- 22% - 39%
- 40% - 57%
- 58% - 100%
- No Data
- Denver Neighborhoods
- ★ Programs Free to Families and Serve Food

Source:
Community Partnership System
9-16-2013

DENVER
CHILDREN'S AFFAIRS

Comprehensive approach to quality

ASSESS — Quality standards; Performance measures

PLAN — Performance feedback; Improvement planning

IMPROVE — Technical assistance and coaching; Targeted training

From *Building Citywide Systems for Quality*
Nicole Yohalem
Forum for Youth Investment, 2011

Lessons on afterschool systems and more

Free reports, toolkits, videos & more

wallacefoundation.org

Jennifer Brown Lerner
American Youth Policy Forum
jlerner@aypf.org

www.aypf.org