Informing After-School Practices: Towards an Understanding of How Site Directors Utilize Information to Do What They Do

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Informing After-School Practices:
Towards an Understanding of How Site Directors Utilize Information to Do What They Do

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Education

by

Adam Christopher Sheppard

Dissertation Committee:
Distinguished Professor Jacquelynne Sue Eccles, Chair
Professor Deborah Lowe Vandell
Associate Professor Thurston Domina

2014
DEDICATION

To my parents and sister

in recognition of their encouragement and support.
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Adam C. Sheppard

Primary Areas of Interest

Positive youth development through organized activities  
Professional development of adult leaders in youth-serving organizations  
Design and implementation of after-school programs  
Youth sports and physical activity programming

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UC IRVINE, M.A. in Education, 2011  
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  * Teaching PE and Health in Elementary Schools (credential); Prof. Johnston (Fall 2009)
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  * Issues in K-12 Education; Prof. D’warte (Spring 2009)
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Professional Experience

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- Member of the founding team of a start-up charter high school utilizing project-based learning to teach engineering and design concepts to underserved urban youth
- Responsible for the development of overall school culture through a variety of non-classroom experiences (e.g., mentoring groups, assemblies, lunch-time and after-school activities)
- Oversaw the recruitment and training of instructors for after-school enrichment courses in a variety of categories (e.g., sports, arts, technology, performing and visual arts, engineering and design)
- Collaborated with local businesses to facilitate career exploration opportunities for students
- Assisted with the development of the school's educational technology implementation plan

UC IRVINE, Lecturer/Researcher  
Irvine, CA (Sept. 2008 - July 2013)
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- Collaborated with several local after-school programs to facilitate service-learning opportunities for undergraduate students seeking the Certificate in After-School Education offered by the School of Education
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YMCA of ORANGE COUNTY, Associate Executive Director of Health and Wellness  
Santa Ana, CA (May 2007 - Aug. 2008)
- Oversaw the implementation of $1.5 million dollar Carol M. White Physical Education Program Grant--focused on training elementary school classroom teachers physical education best practices
- Secured $500,000 contract with Santa Ana Unified School District to train 1100 elementary school teachers in physical education principles
- Coordinated with school and community resources to improve health and wellness initiatives in local elementary schools throughout Orange County
YMCA of ORANGE COUNTY, Physical Education Specialist  
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UCLA ATHLETICS, Student Athletic Trainer  
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Kimberly-Clark Foundation, YMCA of Orange County (2007)
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Social Emotional Development Lab; School of Education (2008 - 2013)
Teaching Assistant Policy Development Committee; School of Education (2009 - 2010)
Pedagogical Consultant; Teaching, Learning, and Technology Center (2009 - 2010)
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OTHER
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Professional Association Membership

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American Educational Researchers Association
California School-Age Consortium (Orange County Chapter)
Society for Research on Adolescence
Society for Research on Child Development
Informing After-School Practices:
Towards an Understanding of How Site Directors Utilize Information to Do What They Do

By

Adam Christopher Sheppard

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Irvine, 2014

Distinguished Professor Jacquelynne S. Eccles, Chair

Building upon work related to clearly articulated program elements being indicative of quality programs (Granger, 2008; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003), the purpose of this study was to describe what youth practitioners (in a large ASP organization) discuss when describing their program models. There are four main findings from this preliminary work: (1) pro-social outcomes were the most frequent categories of goals described by program staff; (2) individual site coordinators identify slightly different lists of program elements, even when operating within the same organization; (3) associations between activities and outcomes were most frequently correlational; and (4) practitioners rely upon a wide variety of types of information within the practices, but personal beliefs and the youth participants themselves were the most frequently mentioned.

Of the goals identified, two major categories emerged from the data: youth-centered goals (i.e., personal/psychological, social development, academic, fun/enjoyment, homework completion, whole-child, outside the program, and physical) and program-centered goals (environment, fill time, and individualized programming). A variety of activity categories also
emerged from the program descriptions (i.e., art, games, enrichment, group activities, homework assistance, academic, student choice, behavior management strategies, community involvement, and technology). When describing the associations between goals and activities, the primary relations described were correlational—lacking clearly identified mechanisms of association.

Of the types of information practitioners discussed they used, four major categories emerged: (1) practitioner-centered information (i.e., belief, personal preference, experience—as a professional, personal background, professional development, education, and experience—as a participant); (2) site-specific information (i.e., youth participants, logistical pragmatics, tradition, fun, goals, participant families, school affiliation, and trial and error); (3) organizational learning (i.e., knowledge sharing, organizational requirements, supervisors); and (4) external information (i.e., Internet, local community, time of year, contemporary culture and events, written materials, educational policies, research—conceptual and explicit, funders).
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Building upon work related to clearly articulated program elements being possible indicators of higher quality after-school programs (e.g., Granger, 2008; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003), the purpose of this study is to determine how site directors, in two multi-site youth-serving organizations, discuss the development of various elements when describing their program models. The major questions guiding the inquiry are: *What are the elements that site directors articulate while describing their program models?* and *What types of information do they rely upon when designing and implementing various program elements?* The answers to these questions will help inform how various program elements are developed, as well as the potential processes by which site directors utilize information within their practices. are able to clearly articulate program elements (e.g., Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003).

To address the major questions in this study, the site directors’ own words are required as a primary source of data, so an innovative interview method was developed. Through a collaborative process, the interviewer and site director build a visual representation of the program model (i.e., goals, activities, and associations between), which serves as the focal point of the discussion of practices at the given site. Additionally, keeping the program model visible throughout the interview serves to anchor the discussion of how site directors utilize information within the previously discussed program elements. The assessment of programatic elements and associated information sources, as well as the methodological approach to data collection, are major contributions of this study to the youth development field.
Background

A growing body of research suggests that organized activities represent important contexts for youth development (Mahoney, Larson, & Eccles, 2005). For example, researchers have reported links between youth involvement and individual, family, peer, and community factors that promote healthy development, including psychological well-being, social development, academic orientation, and reduced risk behavior involvement (for recent reviews see Durlak, Mahoney, Bohnert, & Parente, 2010; Mahoney, Parente, & Zigler, 2010; Mahoney, Vandell, Simpkins, & Zarrett, 2009). And yet, as the research and program evaluation literature continues to grow, furthering the discussion of the benefits of participation, caution is needed as not all programs are designed and implemented in ways associated with positive development (Durlak & Weisberg, 2007). With this in mind, the primary question driving the field is shifting from “do programs make a difference,” to “why are some programs more effective than others?” (Granger, 2010). To address this question, key components differentiating programs need to be identified.

Features of Developmental Settings

After evaluating various evidence from developmental research more broadly, Eccles and Gootman (2002) described eight features (Features) of activities that contribute toward positive outcomes in youth. The eight features are: (1) physical and psychological safety; (2) appropriate structure; (3) supportive relationships; (4) opportunities to belong; (5) positive social norms; (6) support for efficacy and mattering; (7) opportunities for skill building; and (8) family, school, and community efforts (see Appendix A for a more detailed description of the features). While not specific to organized after-school programs per se, the work by Eccles and Gootman is widely cited throughout the youth development literature and reflects a base for research in this
field. My project, however, is the first to take these *Features* and assess the degree to which they are identified within different organized activity settings—one school-based after-school program (ASP) and one community-based organization (CBO). Understanding how the *Features* are (or are not) identified within the two organizations of interest, both with multiple sites of operation, will be a major contribution of this project to the field.

Interestingly, *knowledgeable staff* is not explicitly stated as one of the features. To develop these features within the various organized activity contexts, it is assumed that the youth practitioners who direct and supervise programs need to have some knowledge as to how to develop them. For example, to provide *appropriate structure*, adults need to know what *appropriate structure* looks like. Additionally, to provide *opportunities for belonging*, adults need to know how to recognize individual differences within the youth and tailor activities to meet their specific needs, within the *appropriate structure*.

When considering the *Features*, it appears that *staff knowledge* is an assumed characteristic, which is somewhat supported by recent work on the relation between program staff and program quality (Conroy & Coatsworth, 2006; Rosenthal & Vandell, 1996; Mahoney, Lavine, & Hinga, 2010; Smith et al., 2009; Wiersma & Sherman, 2005). While youth can contribute toward the development of their own activities, program staff provide the resources and guidance necessary for implementing the programs, so they are the ones who influence the features of the program. Yet, the question still remains—are the *Features* reflective of a *knowledge base* that staff bring to these organized activities? Or, is this information learned through the experience of working in these settings? For example, do adults have preconceived notions as to what *positive social norms* they desire to develop through various activities within their programs, or are the norms developed in conjunction with program participants offering
staff the opportunity to support efficacy and mattering through supportive relationships? To help address these questions, this project relies upon interview data from site directors, those adults whose main responsibilities relate to the development and implementation of specific program features, instead of front-line staff, who are typically only responsible for implementing predefined activities.

Using the list of Features described by Eccles and Gootman will aid the discussion of information use (or non-use) more generally within organized youth settings. As in the questions above, assessing where the various Features come from—whether reflective of a knowledge base brought to the program or developed through experiences within—will serve to ground this study within the broader youth development research literature. In particular, given the current climate of “research-based practices” (discussed more fully later), evidence of the varying Features in activities evidence may be indicative of “research use” within these settings more generally. Alternatively, however, the absence of Features may be indicative of the absence of research use, as well.

**Sequenced activities and goals**

Similar to the work by Eccles and Gootman, research by Durlak and colleagues has illuminated additional components to after-school programs that help influence youth participants. Updating the meta-analysis of a widely-cited report (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007) on indicators of program quality, Durlak, Weissberg, and Pachan's (2010) recent meta-analysis supports their previous findings that programs with larger effects have a combination of sequenced, active, focused, and explicit (SAFE) features. **Sequenced:** Does the program use a connected and coordinated set of activities to achieve their objectives relative to skill development? **Active:** Does the program use active forms of learning to help youth learn new
skills? *Focused:* Does the program have at least one component devoted to developing personal or social skills? *Explicit:* Does the program target specific personal or social skills? Through both analyses, the authors report that programs with SAFE features are associated with greater academic measures, as well as personal and social skill development (Durlak et al., 2010b), when compared to programs without SAFE features.

Following a similar review of after-school program literature, Granger (2008) indicates that being explicit about program goals, implementing activities focused on those goals, and getting youth actively involved are all practices of effective programs. To address the question of “why are some programs more effective than others,” Granger argues that one characteristic may be whether organizations have sequenced program elements (goals and their related activities). From an evaluation standpoint, Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) state, “Clearly articulated elements of youth development programs would allow researchers to design measures to capture the presence of elements within programs, and then use that information to better understand why a program succeeded or failed in promoting positive outcomes for its participants” (p. 98). Understandably, having “clearly articulated elements of youth development programs” is useful to begin to answer Granger's pointed question, but it also raises a more basic question as well: “Are site directors able to “clearly articulate” elements when asked to discuss their programs?” To address this question, it is necessary to be able to assess what site directors discuss while describing their program elements (both goals and associated activities). Utilizing an unique interview method (described below) designed to capture the words of site directors responsible for the design and implementation of program elements my dissertation helps address this gap within the research literature.
**Research Question 1:** What are the program elements practitioners identify when describing the design of their programs?

To answer this question, the following questions need to be addressed, as well: “What are the program goals?” and “What are the associated program activities?”

**Anticipated goals and activities**

Unlike other organized activity types focused on more singular content areas (e.g., sports, drama, arts, faith), after-school programs (ASPs) typically offer a variety of programs and activities across a breadth of content areas. To understand the types of activities site directors may identify when describing their program models, a discussion of influential educational policies associated with oversight of after-school activities is in order.

In 1994, an amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), authorized the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program, originally intended to provide funding to school districts to support continuing educational opportunities. Centers were to provide a variety of services to local communities, but “activities that offer expanded learning opportunities for children and youth in the community” was indicated as a particular priority. In 2002, however, the 21st CCLC program underwent a significant transformation when Congress reauthorized it as Title IV, Part B, of the ESEA (P.L. 107-110). Under the reauthorization, a greater emphasis was placed on improving academic achievement for low-performing schools with high percentages of low-income students. With this shift also came a new set of authorized activities:

- Remedial education activities and academic enrichment learning programs, including providing additional assistance to students to improve their academic achievement
- Mathematics and science education activities
• Arts and music education activities
• Entrepreneurial education programs
• Tutoring services (including those provided by senior citizen volunteers) and mentoring programs
• Activities that emphasized language skills and academic achievement for students with limited English proficiency
• Recreational activities
• Telecommunications and technology education programs
• Expanded library service hours
• Programs that promoted parental involvement and family literacy
• Programs that provided assistance to students who had been truant, suspended or expelled, to allow them to improve their academic achievement
• Drug- and violence-prevention programs, counseling programs and character education programs

Given the prominence of 21st CCLC programs in the after-school landscape, one might speculate that the above list may provide a basis for identified “elements” within various after-school programs, if site directors were asked to clearly articulate program components (e.g., Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003).

A recent report on the findings from the Youth Program Quality Intervention (YPQI) study (Smith et al., 2012), highlights some of the activities observed in contemporary after-school settings. Through their evaluation of quality improvement training on after-school program practices, Smith and colleagues identified various activity types as described by study participants. Table 1 describes the most common types of activity offerings listed by site
directors. Similar to the 21st CCLC recommendations, the results reflect the fact that most after-school sites offer programming in multiple content areas. In both the 21st CCLC programs and the YPQI activities lists, the most common types of activities were related to social-emotional development and academic support. As it relates to assessing how site directors describe various elements of their programs (both goals and associated activities) in the current study, it is hypothesized that socio-emotional and academic activities will be prominent within the program models described.

And yet, in light of Granger's and other authors' assertions that having activities linked to specific goals is a potential characteristic of higher quality programs, a discussion of the possible goals observed in after-school settings is also required. In the YPQI study, Smith and colleagues asked site managers to rank order their program objectives, and over half indicated academic support (a combination of “academic support” and “homework help”) was a primary objective.

As it relates to the current study, it is anticipated that academic-focused objectives will be indicated by site directors when describing their programs. Beyond academic support, site directors in the YPQI study also included objectives related to social and civic development, as well artistic development, recreation, and various other objectives, as well. While academic objectives may be a primary focus among after-school site directors, program objectives are anticipated to be associated with a variety of constructs.

Given the variety of objectives and associated activities anticipated to be observed within after-school settings, the question as to how these practices arise needs to be addressed. Understanding how site directors “learn to do what they do” can help inform the development of professional development and educational opportunities to help the propagation of “best practices”--especially given the current educational climate of accountability and evidence-based
practices. For the remainder of this manuscript, *practices* will be used to refer to both the practices of the organization and the organizational policies that inform the practices. The knowledge and expertise of the adults working in these organized contexts can often be a limiting factor in determining program quality and overall effectiveness in influencing associated outcomes (Granger, 2008; Larson, Rickman, Gibbons, & Walker, 2010; Smith, Lo, Frank, Sugar, & Pearson, 2009). In light of this, an important question is: “What information do youth development professionals rely upon to inform their practices?”

**Research Question 2:** What types of information do youth practitioners use to inform their work?

Embedded within this larger question are the following supporting questions: What are the sources of information? What are the mediums by which it is received? How prominent is research evidence within these sources of information?

To help begin to address these questions, the next section provides a review of the available literature related to how youth practitioners—across organized activities more generally—learn to do what they do.

**Youth Practitioner Learning Across Contexts**

**After-school programs**

After-school programs (ASPs) are typically offered into two settings: (1) on school campuses, or (2) off-campus within community-based organizations (CBOs). Aside from the location of operation, the programs are typically combined within discussions of ASPs more generally within the organized activities literature, so they are combined here during the review. One important contribution of the current study, however, is the separation of the two.
Unlike faith-based and youth sports organizations that focus on more narrow content areas, ASPs typically offer programming in broad content areas (e.g., academic/homework assistance, recreation time, arts, music, etc.) requiring youth practitioners within these settings to have a much broader knowledge base for their work. Recent discussions of the current state of ASPs, however, highlight a particular lack of formal education and training available for their staff (National Afterschool Association [NAA], 2006; Mahoney et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2009).

The literature regarding staff knowledge is less developed than in the other organized youth-serving contexts, but it is known that ASPs are organizing professional development programming and sometimes send their staff to workshops and conferences to gain training (Mahoney et al., 2010). Even so, opportunities for training are typically only made available after the staff member is hired. Unlike traditional school-day teachers, ASP staff are not required to have any credentials for their work. Instead, the only job requirement (if only by certain ASPs) is either a high school diploma with previous experience working with youth or college course credit in child development or a related field. More work is needed to understand how the practices within ASPs are developed—an area where the current project contributes to the field. Additionally, the distinction between school-based and community-based ASPs may influence the discussion of information use to inform practices in ASPs more generally, so for purposes of this study they are separated.

With the limited literature available regarding information use to inform practices in after-school settings, literature related to alternative activity settings can help provide additional background for the development of a unifying framework. Studies regarding the development of practices in faith-based and youth sports settings are described below.
Faith-based settings.

The relation between spirituality and religious practice and the development of adolescents is seeing a resurgence within the literature (Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Hong, 2008; Lerner, Roeser, & Phelps, 2008; Smith, 2003). As described by these and other authors, adolescents who participate in spiritual and/or religious activities (i.e., faith-based organizations [FBOs]) display a variety of positive characteristics: identity exploration, initiative, emotional regulation, teamwork and social skills, positive relationships, and connection to adult networks and social capital (Larson, Hansen, and Moneta, 2006).

Similar to the discussion of ASPs, little is known as to what faith-based youth practitioners know about their work, but work on youth involvement in faith communities more broadly (Emmett, 2008) provides the beginnings of a conceptual framework. Within this area of study, the discussion centers on adult leaders being actively engaged in their own spiritual development, which they then use as a model in their own work with the youth.

In his description of spiritual development in faith communities, Emmett (2008) uses two metaphors to describe the youth worker’s role. The first metaphor is that of youth worker as curator, where the practitioner exposes youth to the artifacts of spiritual practice and uses her knowledge of the meanings and values of each to guide the youth’s spiritual inquiry. The artifacts within this metaphor, refer to a collection of various elements (e.g., sacred texts, music, objects, places, rituals) representative of the given faith community. The assumption is that the youth practitioner is actively engaged in her own spiritual development with these artifacts, and this personal experience serves as the framework for interaction with youth in these settings. Then, through interactions akin to apprentice-style learning, the practitioner is able to transfer her own knowledge to the youth in the activity.
Emmett’s second metaphor is that of *youth worker as navigational guide*, where the youth practitioner uses the experiences of the youth within the surrounding environment to guide the youth through a series of questions to help the youth find their place in this life. Some of the questions Emmett suggests are: *Is my experience typical of that of other people? Do people in other places, and even other times, report similar experiences?* By comparing the youth’s experience to the experiences of others, the youth practitioner helps the youth find their own meaning behind experiences. The youth practitioner’s previous experiences and beliefs/values appear to serve as the basis for this guidance.

In another essay describing how spiritual development might factor in to youth worker preparation, Kimball (2008) calls for the integration of spiritual practices within a variety of youth-serving settings, not just religious institutions. She claims, “Once introduced, spiritual development in youth worker preparation is an ongoing reflexive process. It simultaneously equips individuals to be more attentive to and confident about spiritual dimensions of everyday life and professional practice, while it transforms the environment in which their work is conducted” (p. 113). Yet, the process(es) by which youth practitioners are able to develop the knowledge needed to reflect upon their own spiritual development is not described. If faith-based youth practitioners solely rely upon their previous experience—or their own knowledge of their own spiritual development—they may be limiting their ability to effectively develop programs for the youth under their care.

While more work is needed to better understand the knowledge base of faith-based youth practitioners, previous experience with spiritual practices appears to be a primary source of information for work in this setting. Like ASP site directors, few faith-based youth workers have formalized training on how to work in these settings. Often, faith-based youth practitioners are
hired with the understanding that they are actively engaged in their own spiritual development and that they will learn, through on-the-job experiences, how to support the spiritual development of youth. As it relates to the current study, ASP site directors may rely upon their own experiences in similar ways to practitioners in faith-based organizations. The extent to which this previous experience is a component to how site directors implement their programs will be a contribution of the findings from this project.

**Youth sports.**

Unlike the previously discussed organized activity contexts, more is known about how youth sport coaches learn to coach. Youth sport coaches may utilize clinics/seminars, formal mentoring, books, or even the Internet (e.g., Erickson, Bruner, MacDonald, & Cote, 2008; Gilbert & Trudel, 2005; Wright, Trudel, & Culver, 2007) to inform their coaching, but similar to the settings discussed above, previous experience (either playing or coaching) appears to be the greatest source of information used (Lemyre, Trudel, & Durand-Bush, 2007; Wiersma & Sherman, 2005).

In one study (Lemyre et al., 2007), 30 of 36 youth sport coaches interviewed had prior playing experience in their coached-sport, which they frequently referred to in their own coaching practices. This previous experience served as the basis for their coaching knowledge, especially for those coaches who assumed a head-coaching role without previous coaching experience (16 of 36). While previous experience served as the knowledge base for entry-level coaches, it is interesting to note that the coaches said within the first 3 years as a head coach, they gained the most from “stealing” strategies by watching other coaches. They felt that other coaches were not open to sharing ideas, so they had to rely more on observation to gain new
techniques. The competitive culture of youth sport may hinder collaboration amongst coaches, which may predispose coaches to overly rely upon their previous experiences.

Alternatively, the competitive culture may influence coaches to turn to additional sources of information (e.g., research evidence). As coaches transition from novice to expert coaches, understanding how they are able to learn additional techniques beyond their previous experiences is important to consider. In assessing the development of youth hockey coaches, Werthner and Trudel (2006) used Moon’s flexible network metaphor for learning (Moon, 2004) to interpret the processes by which coaches sought additional information. Within the network metaphor, the learner’s cognitive structure changes and adapts to the influence of three types of learning situations: (1) mediated, (2) unmediated, and (3) internal.

In mediated situations the learning is directed by another person (i.e., conference or workshop attendance, formal mentorship), while in unmediated situations the learning is directed by the learner in the absence of an instructor (i.e., reading, Internet, informal discussions with assistant coaches). In internal situations, learning indicates the reflection upon ideas within the learner’s cognitive structure. Within this framework, learning acquired in mediated situations can also be used to inform learning in unmediated settings (and vice-versa) through the learner’s reflection upon his or her learning. Each learning situation influences the other through the cognitive network. As it relates to my project, differentiating between mediated and unmediated learning environments will help describe potential mediums for research acquisition and use more generally.

In a study on how youth sport coaches learn (Wright, Trudel, & Culver, 2007), seven different learning situations were identified: (a) large-scale coach education programs; (b) coaching clinics/seminars; (c) formal mentoring; (d) books/videotapes; (e) personal experiences
related to sport, family, and work; (f) face-to-face interactions with other coaches; and (g) the Internet. Using Werthner and Trudel’s distinction between learning environments, the first three (a-c) represent mediated learning environments while the remaining four (d-g) indicate unmediated learning environments. Among the 35 coaches interviewed in the study, personal experience—especially related to playing experience—was a primary information source coaches relied upon during their own practices. Of interest, though, were the differences between experienced and beginner coaches, when seeking information beyond their previous experience. Beginner coaches tended to seek clinics and workshops related to psychosocial training, while seeking books related to technical skill development. More experienced coaches, however, utilized clinics for technical training and used books for psychosocial skill development. The duration of an individual practitioner’s experience within a given youth context may influence the medium through which content is sought.

**Unifying framework.**

From the descriptions of the various organized activity contexts, we see that youth practitioners tend to rely upon their previous experiences to inform their work with youth. Given the broad range of content areas addressed within ASPs, the site director's previous experiences may be related to various practices in different ways. While the content of previous experiences will vary between individuals, understanding that it serves as a knowledge base for their work provides a starting point for a greater discussion of how additional information (e.g., research use) is used to inform practices within ASPs more generally.

There has not been a systematic analysis of how information is used to inform practices across varying ASP settings. As school-based ASPs are typically coupled with CBOs within discussions more generally, separating the two will help address whether or not site directors in
these two settings learn in different ways. By assessing types of information used across contexts, the proposed project contributes substantially to understanding the professional development of after-school program site directors.

**Research Question 3: In what ways do program elements vary across after-school settings?**

As previously stated, school-based and community-based after-school programs are often lumped together within the ASP moniker. And yet, the locations in which each program type operates may contribute to different approaches to the development of program practices (through stakeholder influence, differential access to resources, personal background and experience of staff), but these distinctions have not been studied within the organized activity literature. The systematic analysis of differentiations between these two activity settings will be a contribution of the current study to the field.

Related secondary questions under this research question are: How do identified elements compare (or differ) between school-based and community-based after-school programs? How do identified elements compare (or differ) across after-school organizations (within the same context)?

**Summary**

This study assesses the various types of information site directors utilize across two different after-school organization types (school-based and community-based). Through a series of semi-structured interviews, a rich array of information was collected to situate site director learning (including potential research use) within the two settings. Not only does the project identify types of research use and processes of research use across settings, the design contributes toward methodological development in this area. Through the data collected in the
study, an information use framework for after-school settings is presented. A better understanding of how information is used within these settings will be instrumental to understanding how research is used to inform the practices within youth-serving organizations more generally.

**Research Questions**

2. What are the program elements site directors identify when describing the design of their programs? What are the program goals? What are the associated program activities? How do practitioners describe the associations between goals and activities?

What types of information do site directors use to inform their work?

  - What are the sources of information?
  - What are the mediums by which it is received?
  - How prominent is research evidence within the information used?

In what ways do program elements vary across various youth-serving contexts?

  - How do identified elements compare (or differ) between school-based and community-based ASPs?
CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The main focus of this project was the assessment of various types of information site directors use (or do not use) while developing and implementing their programs. Recognizing the extensive literature suggesting organized activities represent significant developmental experiences for youth (e.g., Mahoney et al., 2005), the assessment of the extent to which research evidence is (or is not) used in these settings is of particular interest.

This dissertation offers the opportunity to capture various portions of information use by site directors in two organizations (school-based after-school program, and community-based organization). Through observations and semi-structured interviews, a rich array of information was collected to situate site director learning (including potential research use) within the two settings.

Research Design

Research Population

The study population consists of site directors within two youth-serving organizations:

(a) Morville\textsuperscript{1} Unified School District’s after school program (MUSD), and (b) the City of Boomtown Department of Recreation after-school programs (CB Rec).

Seven directors (from separate school sites) were recruited from the 27 sites MUSD operates. The seven participants were recruited through the after-school coordinator at the district office. After discussing the overall purpose behind the study with the coordinator, she chose the seven participants to provide a representative sample of the overall organization—Morville is a

\textsuperscript{1} All names used in this study are pseudonyms
diverse community, with a broad assortment of low-income to middle-class neighborhoods. As practices are typically established at the local level (Huston, 2005; McCall, 2009), purposeful selection of directors within MUSD was necessary to explore varying characteristics of neighborhood influences on practice.

According to the MUSD website, “The MUSD [Center for Afterschool, Recreation, Enrichment, and Safety] Program provides a well-defined, high quality program which is educational, recreational, enriching and supplemental to the family school and community.” The model is primarily fee-for-services, but fee-remission opportunities are available based on family need.

In contrast, “The City of Boomtown Community Services Department offers free recreation programs for youth at four locations during the school year. Children attending the program are supervised by leaders trained in first aid and CPR. Center activities include: Arts and crafts, excursions, games, homework assistance, special events, and sports.” All four directors from the four community-based programs CB Rec operates were recruited to participate in this study, through the program supervisor at the city recreation department main office.

The two organizations were identified through online searches and contacting local schools where local youth development professionals identified additional programs to consider. To be considered for the interviews, directors had job responsibilities associated with program development and oversight within their particular organizations.

**Instruments/Measures/Sources of Data**

**Interview.** A central component to the study method was a series of semi-structured interviews with directors in the two organizations of interest. The first portion of the interview consisted of a series of open-ended questions related to the director’s job, training, and
background experience. The protocol for this portion was an adaptation of the program staff survey from the Study of Promising Practices (Vandell et al., 2004) and consisted of questions like: How would you describe your current primary role(s) in this program? How often do you plan activities? How often do you meet with other staff at this program to discuss program-related issues (without students) for at least 30 minutes? What types of training did you receive this past year? Prior to taking your job with this after-school program, how many years of experience did you have working in other social services, youth services, or community organization(s)? See Appendix B for the full list of questions.

Following the background portion of the interview, I utilized an adaptation to the Scanlan Collaborative Interview Method (SCIM) (Scanlan, Russell, Wilson, & Scanlan, 2003) to test and extend existing theory regarding the use of information. While the method has primarily been used to describe sources of commitment to sport, it is useful for testing and extending theory on other constructs as well. From a grounded theory perspective, the SCIM offers the interviewee, in partnership with the researcher, the opportunity to derive a personal model of a particular construct. Using this method provided the opportunity to capture the director’s own words as he or she described the components of his or her particular program, while also elaborating upon the types of information that inform practices within his or her organization.

The adaptation was as follows (an outline of the interview is available as Appendix D): Following a series of questions related to the director’s background and role (Sections 1 and 2), the director constructed his or her model of the program (Section 3). During this section, the director listed the specific goals/outcomes youth are expected to gain through participation in the program. As each outcome was identified, it was written on an index card (e.g., “responsibility”) and placed on the right side of the collaborative interview board in front of the director and the
researcher. As additional outcomes were identified, they were also added to the board to begin construction of the director-derived model of his or her given program—each outcome written on a separate index card.

Next, the director identified key activities associated with the outcomes, which were added to the left side of collaborative interview board—again, each activity on a separate index. To capture any relations established between activities and outcomes, each activity was color-coded, and each of the related outcomes was marked with a dot of the respective color card. If the director identified an association between activities and goals, he or she was asked to elaborate upon the relation(s) to assess related mechanisms. Occasionally, directors would identify additional goals not previously captured within the model after discussing associated activities, so these were also added to the model (see Appendix F for site director models).

Following the identification of the various elements of the model, the director indicated how he or she learned that each item should be included within the program. For example, if “homework assistance” was identified as a component within the director’s model, she was asked, “Where did you learn that homework assistance should be a key component within your program?” At this point, the director identified the source (e.g., personal experience, tradition, educational background, research evidence) or the medium (e.g., book, conversation with organization personnel, Internet, training seminar, research report) that served as the basis behind the item (multiple sources or mediums were identified for the various elements captured in the director-derived models). Each item within the model was discussed as to its rationale for being included.

Following the use-of-information portion of the interview, a more in-depth conversation regarding the specific uses of research to inform practice occurred. At this point in the interview,
directors presented specific strategies used to evaluate the relevance and usefulness of different kinds of research to address the needs of their local contexts. In addition, targeted questions were used to obtain director thoughts and feelings regarding potential facilitators to, and barriers of, the use of research.

**Data Analysis**

Coding of interview transcripts was completed using Dedoose (2013).

**Examination of program elements.** Two separate readings of the interview transcripts were used to answer the primary research question: *What are the program elements directors identify when describing the design of their programs?*

*What are the goals and related activities?* The first reading was used to identify the goals the director had for his or her program, as well as to identify activities associated with the indicated goals. While reading the transcript, all references to goals were coded. As new goal categories were identified, they were added to the coding scheme. During the first read, activities associated with each goal were also coded. As with the goals, activity types not identified prior were added to the coding manual.

*How do directors describe the associations between goals and activities?* The second reading was used to identify relevant associations between goals and activities. While coding this portion of the interview transcripts, specific mechanisms of association were sought. As additional mechanisms were identified, they were coded and added to the coding scheme.

**Differentiation of program elements across organizations.** To address the research question, *In what ways do program elements vary across various youth-serving contexts?* a data matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was created to offer comparisons of goals and activities across
programs within the same organization, as well as offer broader comparisons across the two organizations.

**Examination of information use.** To answer the primary research question (*What are the types of information site directors use to inform their work?*), additional readings of interview transcripts were required. As with the goal and activity readings, each type of information identified by directors was coded separately. Additionally, differentiating between *source* and *medium* of information was included within the analysis. As with the goal and activity analysis, a data matrix was created to offer comparisons between programs within the same organization, as well as broad comparisons between the two organizations.

Codes were developed and applied to each list to identify patterns within programs, as well as between programs in different contexts. In addition to the lists, each *source that informs* was categorized to aid in the comparisons. Second, a list of all the identified *mediums of information* was also compiled in the same manner as the *sources that inform* list. These two lists were used to answer the questions: *What are the sources of information?* and *What are the mediums by which it is received?*

Within the sources that inform portion of the analysis, particular attention was paid toward the identification of evidence of research use within the various programs – the extent to which directors explicitly identified research evidence was noted. Additionally, items that were not identified as being informed by research were coded for identification of common themes. The available research literature (e.g., Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Mahoney et al., 2005; Durlak et al., 2010) was used to search for potential evidence supporting the item being included in youth-serving contexts. This portion of the analysis was used to answer the following questions: *How prominent is research evidence within these sources of information?*
Trustworthiness and Credibility

Triangulation—collecting data from a variety of individuals and methods—was a key part of the study design (Fielding & Fielding, 1986; Maxwell, 2005). Multiple participants within each context provided a number of perspectives regarding work in each particular organization, which particularly aided the inter-organization comparison. Furthermore, multiple participants within each organization offered the opportunity to assess the extent to which previous experience factored into individual director practices.

To decrease the risk for misinterpretation of meaning of the data, I sought respondent validation through the use of “member checks” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Maxwell, 2005). Participants were presented with various findings of the preliminary data analysis and were encouraged to clarify any misunderstandings within the interpretation of the data.

Furthermore, discrepant information within the data was another key part in the overall analyses of findings from the analysis. Beyond seeking confirmation of potential findings within the study through multiple director interviews within each organization, I also sought disconfirming evidence within the data (Maxwell, 2005) as well. Both supporting and disconfirming data helped determine whether a particular finding was more plausible to retain or to modify.

Summary

This study utilizes in-depth interviews of multiple after-school site directors to address the question: *In what ways do program elements vary across varying youth-serving contexts?* Additional questions include: *What are the goals directors describe? What are the activities associated with goals? How do identified elements compare (or differ) across various youth-serving organizations (within the same context)?* and *How do identified elements compare (or
differ) between the different contexts? By comparing elements identified within the various program models, I was able to describe the extent to which site directors are able to “clearly articulate” program features (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003).

Utilizing the interview data, this study also addressed the question: What types of information do site directors in two youth-serving organizations use to inform their practices? Additional questions include: What are the sources of information? What are the mediums by which it is received? and How prominent is research evidence within these sources of information? Considering the instrumental use of research is quite rare and the conceptual use of research is much more common (Nutley et al., 2007; Weiss, 1987, 1998), this study provides a systematic comparison of the types of information site directors use across two organizations in separate settings (school-based after-school program, and community-based organization).
CHAPTER 3
RESULTS

Participant-Derived Models

Appendix E display the participant-derived models from each site director interview. The blue boxes on the left are the activities, while the tan boxes on the left are the goals of the respective program. The colored dots indicate relationships described between each activity and individual goals.

Research Questions and Associated Hypotheses

Research Question 1 – What are the program elements directors identify when describing the design of their programs?

Hypothesis I – Program elements will be primarily related to academics, but pro-social norms will also be identified.

Research Question 3 – In what ways do program elements vary across various youth-serving contexts?

The distinction between school-based and community-based after-school programs has not been systematically addressed within the organized activity literature, so the analysis from this study is an important contribution to the field. As the analysis is closely related to the overall descriptions of each program element within Research Question 1, the differences (or non-differences) between each organization type will be incorporated within the descriptions of each program element respectively.

What are the goals?

Throughout the analysis, two broad categories of goals emerged from the data: (1) youth-centered goals, which were related to the experiences of youth within the programs, and (2)
program-centered goals, which were related to the design and implementation of the programs. Tables 2 and 3 display the results for the two goal categories respectively.

The youth-centered goal themes include: (a) personal/psychological, (b) social, (c) academic enrichment, (d) enjoyment of activities, (e) homework completion, (f) whole-child, beyond the program, and (g) physical. The program-centered goal themes include: (1) environmental design, (2) time filler, and (3) individualize programming.

Youth-centered goals

Personal/Psychological. The most prominent category of goals was that of personal or psychological goals. Ten of the 11 directors identified at least one goal that related to personal characteristics of the youth participants. Goals in this category included references to completing tasks, fostering independence, promoting self-esteem, increasing motivation, and character development. Examples included:

Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): I think it would be another [goal], especially in this homework area, trying to get the kids to be responsible for finishing their homework. A lot of them, they don't want to do it necessarily, or they'll wait until the last minute, or just trying to build that responsibility with them to get in instead of doing other fun items that we are doing.

Tessa (Springborough, MUSD): Music. Why we do it? It’s part of our program, again. I don’t know how to put it in words. I think it creates allowing them to be doing stuff. It creates positive self-esteem and I think self-esteem is a big oh, maybe that would go in here.

Interviewer: Did you want to add that because you said …
Tessa: Could I add self-esteem in there?
Interviewer: Yes, absolutely.

Eden (Roebrook, MUSD): Another goal that we have is for the children to learn to complete tasks that they are assigned, not only in school, but also here at the daycare. If they take a game out of the cupboard and they play the game, they know it's their responsibility to put the game back on the shelf, where it came from, so that way, we don’t lose pieces and have to spend extra money replacing the games. If we put markers out, they know that they have to put the markers back in the container with the lids on, so that the markers don’t get dried out.
If we are outside and they take their jackets off and stuff, they know it's their responsibility to hang up their jackets or their backpacks, whatever supplies that they have so those are some of the … completing the task. We have a homework club, and if their parents request that they do their homework at daycare, that means they complete their homework and have one of the teachers check it off.

Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec): We try to get them interested in education. While the specific constructs discussed within this category covered a broad range of themes (e.g., self-esteem, responsibility, task completion), the directors often referred to wanting to develop participants on a personal level. There was little difference between the two organization types, considering six of the seven MUSD directors included a reference to psychological/personal development within their goals, and all four of the CB Rec directors as well.

**Social development.** Nine of the 11 directors identified goals related to the social development of youth participants. Goals in this category were related to fostering relationships (peer-to-peer, or youth-to-adult), as well as collaboration and general socialization amongst youth. Examples included:

Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): Social skills are huge with us. How we treat each other, how we want to be treated. With that, it feeds into our empowerment because a lot of people don’t understand that they can stand up for themselves or that they can say things when they need to say things. With that, we allow them to have that ability as well as telling others how they feel and having others feel that too.

Juliette (Foxwell, MUSD): Social skills, that's hugely important, because you're teaching them the way to treat each other. That goes along with character, but treating each other fairly, things like that, keeping your hands to yourself, all those little social things that the kids have to learn that if you don't teach them, they're not going to know, so social development.

Tessa (Springborough, MUSD): Independent? In choices that they make whether interacting with their peers, choices that they … anything they do. Playing a game that if somebody does something to them that they don’t like, instead of coming and telling us that they work those out with their words, being able to communicate with other people that they can solve it, you know? We're here.
Eden (Roebrook, MUSD): One of our main goals is that the children learn to work together and be able to solve problems with one another instead of fighting and things.

Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec): A personal goal that I kind of had, and I think this might … I mean, I really can't speak for everyone else, but I always thought when you go to school, you're always call a teacher by their last name. It's always this kind of one directional relationship. Here, we always use first names … Interviewer: Okay.

Lucas: The kids call me by my first name, they call one of my coworkers by her first name. I think we kind of are aiming for that peer relationship. To appeal to them as friends and maybe mentors but not a teacher.

Kennedy (Welworth Community Center, CB Rec): One of the objectives is to get them to interact with other kids.

Similar to the personal/psychological goal theme, this category consisted of a broad array of social-related themes (e.g., interactions with others, social skills, relationship building), but the directors consistently indicated that they desired to not only develop participants individually but also holistically as a group. Also like the personal/psychological goal category, this category appeared to be common throughout most of the program models—five of the seven MUSD directors, and all four of the CB Rec directors indicated social goals for youth participants.

Academic support. Six of the 11 directors identified at least one academic-related goal. Goals in this category were related to individual subjects (e.g., writing) and references to “education” more generally.

Examples from MUSD directors include:

Janelle (Birchridge): It goes along with our literacy objectives and our science objectives.

Janelle (Birchridge): We like to educate them on the things that we can help them scaffold on, things that we can build on as well as.

Scarlett (Kingsgrove): I think a big thing that we're trying to work on our program now is to implement a lot of the ASES components. It would be literacy, math, nutrition, science.

Eden (Roebrook): One of our goals this year is for them to improve their writing skills, so that would be a goal.
An example from the interview with Lucas at Moriconi Learning Center (CB Rec) was:

Lucas: Okay. I think here, specifically, we focus on, sort of like helping kids, education wise.
Interviewer: Okay.
Lucas: Yeah.
Interviewer: Education help? Is that what should I write, or what should I write?
Lucas: Yeah. I would say education help.

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the location of operation of the respective programs, the school-based ASPs (MUSD) were more inclined to include an emphasis on academic development within their descriptions, as compared to only one of the four community-based (CB Rec) directors.

Fun. Six of the 11 directors identified at least one goal related to promoting “fun.” Directors either mentioned fun directly or they referenced student enjoyment. An example includes:

Interviewer: You mentioned fun, is that again, another goal?
Aria (Lilybluff, MUSD): It’s a big one. I really try to do lots of … we make sure they’re safe and that they’re doing stuff that is towards a goal. It might not be everybody’s philosophy, but kids are here a long time. I want them to like coming and I want them to have fun with what they’re doing. As a bonus, then they get to learn about socialization, or learn something educational, or learn how to accomplish something.

Interestingly, less than half of the MUSD directors (three of seven) identified at least one fun-related goal, while three of the four directors at CB Rec included “fun” within their goals.

Homework. Four of the 11 directors indicated homework specifically within the goals of their respective program.

Raelynn (Fairmont Community Center, CB Rec): I would say one of our goals is to make sure that the kids get help with their homework.

In contrast to the academic support goals, “homework completion” was not a specific goal of many of the school-based directors (one of seven in MUSD), but it was more common among the community-based directors (three of the four at CB Rec).
**Whole-child.** Beyond the personal/psychological and social development goal categories, there emerged from the data a more holistic goal category. Four of the 11 directors described goals related to development of the “whole-child.” Examples included:

Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): …one of the unique opportunities that we do have is basically, it’s helping to develop the total child and that includes a social structure, a social dynamic that the day class doesn’t seem to have.

Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): I think the goal is to be well-rounded. Overall, for everything that we do here is to be focusing on the whole-child.

Lucy (Cedarton, MUSD): I think that I try to produce, I guess, a well-rounded child. That’s everything from introducing them to new ideas culturally, music-wise, just in general anything that’s different from what they get feed at home, to give them a wider range of things so that, because a lot of times, some of these kids don’t get to see more than what happens at their home because they’re single … the only child to a single parent and stuff like.

Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec): Kids first.
Interviewer: Okay. What does that mean?
Lucas: The needs of the kids. Like customers always come first. Even if you're having a bad day. This is something they told us and it kind of echoes with me. If you're having a bad day, you can't let it show. Every kid is supposed to feel special. It's like their day. It's supposed to be fun, yet … We kind of focus here on education, but during the summer it's fun.
Interviewer: Okay.
Lucas: We still try to do fun during the school year. Yeah, I think that explains it pretty well.

While not as specific as some of the other goal categories, it was clear from the terminology the directors used (e.g., total child, whole-child, well-rounded) that this was a separate category from the other psycho-social categories. While three of the seven directors at MUSD included holistic goals, only one of the four CB Rec directors referenced included a related goal, so there were slight differences in the occurrence of these goals across the two organizations.

**Outside the program.** Three directors mentioned goals related to extending the influence of the program to other settings, as well as influencing youth development into the future. For example, Lucy (Cedarton, MUSD) stated, “I also have big emphasis on teaching them life
skills,” when describing various clubs she implemented at the site (e.g., sewing, cooking). Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec) mentioned, “We kind of try to get the kids involved with school activities more.”

Similarly, both Lucas and Raelynn (CB Rec) mentioned future directly:

Interviewer: You mentioned something towards the future. Is that separate from the exposure and interest, or should we just lump it in with where it already is?
Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center): I view it … I maybe worded this initially, kind of bad. Like you said, extending your horizons. I think it should be lumped in with that. What do you think?

Raelynn (Fairmont Community Center): I try to help them to see past that gang influence and try to get them to start doing other things, thinking about their future and what they want to do.

While not a particularly common goal type (one MUSD director, and two CB Rec directors included related goals), items within this category all related to taking knowledge, or skills, gained through participation in the program, and applying it in alternative settings. During the conversation with Lucy regarding her teaching “life skills,” she expressed a desire to incorporate skills students could utilize at home, or within the community. Beyond goals related to influencing students during their immediate participation, the directors also indicated a desire for participants to be influenced into the future.

Physical development. Two directors mentioned goals related to the physical development of participants. Eden (Roebrook, MUSD) mentioned targeting motor skill development through arts and crafts, while Kayden (Elden Park, CB Rec) mentioned physical activity more generally. An example reference is:

Kayden (Elden Park, CB Rec): Keeping kids active. Some of the things our supervisor was telling us, like get the kids outside playing.”

Of the youth-centered goal categories, this was the least common among the directors interviewed (one from MUSD and one from CB Rec). As will be addressed later, it is interesting
to note that outdoor games was a common activity utilized within the program models, so it is
interesting to note that physical development was a relatively uncommon goal identified.

**Program-centered goals**

**Environmental design.** Of the goals related to the overall design and implementation of
individual programs, those associated with the design of the environment (e.g., physical safety,
emotional safety, providing space for participants) were most common. Examples include:

Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): First of all, I like to maintain a safe and efficient program
because if you don’t have safety first, you can’t … nothing else can really fall into place.
Because if you structure everything around basically your protocol and your procedures
that are handed down to you by the district standards and the program standards, then
everything is safe and everything else could fall into place after that. Because if you don’t
have a safe environment, I really don’t think that you can maintain any level of
consistency with the rest of the thing.

Safe isn’t actually just a physical environment, it’s actually an emotional environment
too. I feel the children need to feel that they are … they need to feel safe, that this is a
safe haven where they can come and not only be respected but be heard and feel valued.
With that, safety is also the value aspect put into that as well.

Aria (Lilybluff, MUSD): We like to provide a safe program the best we can, so that the
kids are safe and happy. That’s my main goal, actually. I might put that above everything
else.

Lucy (Cedarton, MUSD): We’re like a family environment for them, just to feel like they
can come get a hug and not feel embarrassed about it or, and just have different adults
outside of their parents, that they can feel warm and fuzzy with.

Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec): Kids safety. I think we kind of strive to …
We’re a community center, so we’re kind of striving for a safe haven. Keeping kids off the
street from maybe joining gangs. It seems like all of our community centers are almost
strategically placed in areas of gang activity. We’re kind of like a safe haven for kids. I
said that already.

Kayden (Elden Park, CB Rec): This is like a place where kids can hang out after school
that’s safe. So, I don’t know how you’d word that. Safe environment. I guess that’s a
goal. Safe environment.

Raelynn (Fairmont Community Center, CB Rec): Basically for me, this is it. I just try to
make sure they’re safe and comfortable. This feels like home for some of these kids. Like
literally, they’ll start to take their shoes and sweaters off. “You’re not at home, guys.
Come on.”
Within the broader environmental design category, participant safety and group functioning (i.e., “family”) were common themes. Considering five directors from MUSD and three directors from CB Rec mentioned the overall environment in various goals, there was little difference between how both organizations incorporated this goal type.

**Time filler.** While not explicitly identified on any index cards within the model-building portion of the interviews, four directors made various references to a desire to fill time in the after school program. For example, Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD) mentioned, “I’m having the librarian come in the week after Thanksgiving. That will take up that time.”

In contrast, when describing the use of games within his program, Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec) described using them as a “transitional activity” to fill time at the end of the day before parents arrived to pick up their children. Similarly, both Kayden (Elden Park, CB Rec) and Raelynn (Fairmont Community Center, CB Rec) also mentioned a need to fill time. For example, the following excerpts highlight the directors’ thoughts:

Kayden (Elden Park, CB Rec): Okay. Let’s see. I think it’s just … there’s fun activities, like board games and stuff. How did it become part of it? I think just towards the end of the day, when it’s darker, we always try to bring them in and during summer when it’s hot. We just have those in the back of our head just in case we need to pull something out, like to change the plan of the day, kind of backup. On rainy days, I know all the kids stayed in school and they had to play like silent speedball or board games.

Raelynn (Fairmont Community Center, CB Rec): When I got here, one of the things we always did was indoor games. Especially during the school year if it rains and there’s nothing else do, we’ll be here playing something or if it’s too hot outside and we have the air conditioner on, no one wants to go outside.

Considering one director from MUSD, as opposed to three directors from CB Rec, included goals related to filling time, this goal category may be more associated with community-based programs than with school-based programs.

**Individualized programming.** Three directors (all within MUSD) mentioned a desire to cater programming to meet the needs of individual youth within their programs. For example:
Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): Special needs. I almost forgot about that.
Interviewer: Special needs as an activity or as an outcome?
Scarlett: I think in relation to how I plan all these things. I always have to be cognizant of the fact that I have autistic children. I have children with ADHD, or a speech impediment, or some sort of special need. I am involved in IEP’s, and IHP’s. In my planning, I need to think maybe this child would not be receptive to doing that because of...how can I manipulate and change that and make it so that they can be involved as well? Especially, when things are noisy, I have one autistic child and she, when things are really loud, obviously, that's not setting well with her. I need to find a different activity for her to do or something calming because she may not be happy with it. That's definitely something I have to take into consideration on a daily basis as well.

Aria (Lilybluff, MUSD): One of them may not need this much; some of them need it more. Because we do childcare for kinder through sixth here, usually I have kids from kindergarten to sixth grade. They don’t usually leave this school and they almost always stay with us unless Mom or Dad isn’t working anymore or they move.

While not specifically targeted as a specific goal per se, the references within this category indicate that the directors desired to differentiate program offerings to meet the needs of particular participants. Interestingly, all the references within this category were made by MUSD directors, so they may be more indicative of school-based programs than of community-based programs.

While academic goals were identified within the director models (primarily by MUSD staff), they were not the most prominent category. Instead, pro-social goals (e.g., personal and social) were the primary goal category identified by directors (at both MUSD and CB Rec). The hypothesis that academic goals would be primary was rejected.

**What are the related activities?**

Similar to the goal categories and themes, a variety of categories and themes emerged from the activity descriptions. Table 4 presents the results of the activity code applications for the different sites. The activity themes include: (a) art, (b) games, (c) enrichment, (d) group activities, (e) homework time, (f) academic support, (g) student choice, (h) behavior management, (i) community involvement, and (j) technology.
Art. Ten directors (six from MUSD and all four from CB Rec) discussed the integration of arts and crafts within their programs. Examples of art-based activities described include: painting, water colors, coloring books, and fuse beads.

Games. Ten directors (six from MUSD and all four from CB Rec) also mentioned various forms of games as activities when describing their programs. While games were described in both MUSD and CB Rec programs, they appear to have different types. All the MUSD directors referenced the use of outdoor sports and group games (e.g., kickball, soccer), while indoor games were only discussed by one MUSD director. In contrast, three of the four CB Rec directors referred to indoor games (e.g., logic puzzles, board games, pool, ping pong), but outdoor sports and games (e.g., tag, handball) were still a prominent portion of the programs (all four directors included them in their models).

Enrichment. Eight directors (all seven from MUSD and one from CB Rec) mentioned multiple enrichment activities, identified as supplemental to traditional academic content areas, when describing their programs. Examples of these activities include: cultural activities (e.g., learning names and numbers in different languages), character education (e.g., targeted activities specifically related to character development), performance activities (e.g., drama, music) and specific skill development (e.g., sewing, cooking). One particular activity identified by 3 MUSD directors was a mock vote, which coincided with the presidential election occurring at the same time.

Group activities. In addition to group games, six directors (five from MUSD, and one from CB Rec) discussed various group activities. For example, one group activity MUSD directors described was a group-based sharing time, where students could share stories with their
peers. Two MUSD directors also described integrating themed group parties (e.g., holidays) during the activities portion of the model-building exercise.

**Homework time.** Six directors (four from MUSD and two from CB Rec) included at least one reference to dedicating specific time for students to complete their homework within the activities portion of their models.

**Academic support.** Beyond enrichment activities, five directors identified activities associated with individual subjects (e.g., science, reading, writing). Four of the directors came from MUSD, while the fifth director referencing academic subjects came from CB Rec.

**Community involvement.** Two directors (both from MUSD) discussed activities involving the local communities in which their programs operated. For example, Janelle (Birchridge) mentioned using guest speakers (e.g., local professionals from a variety of sectors) within her program, while Tessa (Springborough) mentioned actively involving youth in community service projects (e.g., food and clothing drives).

**Technology.** Two directors (one from MUSD, one from CB Rec) specifically mentioned integrating technology within their programs. For example, Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec) spoke at length about offering youth the opportunity to play games on the computers after they completed their homework.

**Program practices**

While not specifically associated with individual activities per se, two themes related to program practices were identified within the data: student choice and behavior management strategies.

**Student choice.** Three directors from MUSD (none from CB Rec) giving students time to choose their own activities as integral to the function of their program. In particular, Juliette at
Foxwell (MUSD) spoke at length about involving students within the choice of activities for minimum day theme days. She also elaborated on how the older students typically collaborated together to develop activities for younger students.

**Behavior management.** Two MUSD directors (none from CB Rec) discussed specific behavior management strategies during the activities portion of the interview. More specifically, they discussed the use of “lottery tickets,” which were distributed to students for desirable behaviors. The following excerpt highlights the use of these lottery tickets:

Juliette (Foxwell, MUSD): There are lottery tickets every day. Lottery ticket is a behavior system that we have. They earn lottery tickets for doing good, doing quiet work during homework time. If they sit quietly during homework time and if I don't have to ask them to leave homework time, they get a lottery ticket. They get a lottery ticket every day if they stay on green. We have a behavior system over there. It's dark green, light green, yellow, red. If they stay on green whether it's dark green or light green, they get a lottery ticket at the end of the day. We have a little box up here that we keep lottery tickets.

Every Friday, we pick lottery tickets. I pick 10 lottery tickets every Friday. One Friday, we give ice cream. The second Friday, we give a prize from the prize box, so every other Friday is either ice cream or prize box. During that time, they earn a lot of the lottery tickets.

Similar to the activity descriptions within the YPQI study (Smith et al., 2012), the director descriptions of the various activities incorporated within the respective programs in the current study were primarily academic and social. The hypothesis that socio-emotional and academic activities would be described was supported.

The differences between the school-based and community-based programs were observed in the number of directors mentioning each activity type within their models. From Table 4 (as well as Figures 1 through 11), it is clear that the MUSD directors described more activities than their counterparts in CB Rec. All of the activity types were described more frequently by MUSD directors, as compared to CB Rec directors. In particular, one specific difference between the two
organization types (three directors from MUSD, and none from CB Rec) was offering “student choice” as a component to the program.

**How do directors describe the associations between goals and activities?**

As directors identified individual activities during the model-building portion of the interview, they were also asked to elaborate on the mechanisms by which activities achieved the associated goals. The following categories and themes emerged from the activity-to-goal associations. The goal-activity association themes derived from the data include: (a) correlational intentionality, (b) uncertainty, and (c) intentional development. Table 5 summarizes the themes derived from the activity-to-goal associations portion of the analysis.

**Correlational intentionality.** The most prominent form (all eleven made at least one reference) of association between activities and goals was related to the assumption that offering a particular activity would result in the desired outcome. It appeared directors relied upon a supposed correlation between a given activity and its related outcomes without specific references to explicit mechanisms underlying the association. The directors could describe specific activities that they had intentionally incorporated within their programs, but the associations to intended outcomes were correlational at best. For example, the following excerpts highlight some of the thoughts directors discussed:

Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): We have a time where we sit down at least once a week, if not twice a week, where I read about our theme and I get feedback from the kids. I would consider that a social dynamic.

Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): That provides a sense of problem solving, socialization which is something that they definitely need as well, to work as a group. I try to do group aspects a lot with science because I feel we don't always have a ton of resources. I try to have them in a group so that they can work together, learn how to work together and also accomplish something together. It seems to work.

Tessa (Springborough, MUSD): [Describing the use of group games] They learn … they’re learning because the games are … they have to be a good participant because they can lose, so it has to involve being a good citizen because we have a conflict with other
people and independent. Yes, because they have to learn how to play fairly, and if not then, I mean, I believe its independence too.

From the above examples, the directors seemed to assume that offering “group” activities contributed to the achievement of social-related outcomes.

Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): Even free play, when they're playing games, there's so many things that they can learn just by using a monopoly game. I know we don't always think of those things, but connect four, they're counting.

Aria (Lilybluff, MUSD): It goes with the fun and education. Sometimes, art's just art and then sometimes, they’re learning fine motor skills, or they’re learning how to follow a pattern, or they’re learning about turkeys because they have to make this guy … we’re making these ridiculous … it takes them forever to make the turkeys we’re making today. It can be educational, too. And, sometimes just because it’s cute, they want to make one and Thanksgiving’s coming up or whatever.

In the above examples, the directors mentioned possible outcomes that could be related to the given activities, but they were not specific as to why those particular activities were chosen to achieve individual outcomes within their program models.

Juliette (Foxwell, MUSD): Because we feel that letting kids choose gives them empowerment. They can choose their activities so that things aren't forced on them, and that they'll be happier if they're playing something they want to play instead of being forced to play it. I've tried to make kids do group games and it doesn't work.

Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec): I thinks sports do help with education in that it makes kids disciplined. Both sports and music. I played sports in high school. Even though it does take up a bunch of time, also gets you accustomed to doing something for three or four hours, and scheduling out your time. You can’t do sports in high school if you don't have a certain GPA, so I definitely think they relate to one another.

Interviewer: I think you said the supervisor …

Kayden (Elden Park, CB Rec): Yes. His kids are actually in the program, so he knows how his kids are and, kids now days, like watching TV and playing video games. It is hot outside during summer, but he always wants us playing outside for health reasons, plus it’s just healthy for kids. Get sun. Because of that, we’ve come up with water games that kids enjoy.

Kennedy (Welworth Community Center, CB Rec): We do a lot of tournaments. We had a lot of Tic-Tac-Toe, Connect Four. We’ve had a pool table, ping pong, everything.

Interviewer: Does that relate to any of your goals?

Kennedy: I would say interact with other kids and manners, because it teaches them to be a good winner … just teaches them how to win respectfully and how to lose, as well.
In the above examples, there was a common theme that the mere participation in a given activity would contribute to specific outcomes (e.g., participation in sports contributes to “disciplined kids”), but these relationships are correlational at best, without clearly defined mechanisms in place as to why each particular activity led to desired outcomes. As all directors included at least one reference to a supposed correlation when describing activity-to-goal associations, there was no appreciable difference between the two organization types.

**Uncertainty.** Another prominent theme when analyzing the descriptions of the associations between activities and goals was uncertainty. Typically including a phrase related to “I don’t know,” nine of the eleven directors had at least one incidence of uncertainty while describing activity-to-goal associations. The following excerpts provide examples of the directors’ own words regarding this theme.

Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): We have an enriching environment, yes. Okay. It’s so hard because this is like a blank and nothing else could fall into place, I feel, until this is here. It all relates to it but I can’t say directly.

Juliette (Foxwell, MUSD): Lottery tickets, I don’t know. Somebody else was doing it and I thought it was a neat idea to do. We used to do … what did we do? We used to do points and then, say, you got so many points, they got to go to the price box but we changed it to this. I don’t remember why we did, but it seemed to … I don't know. It was just easier to do, and it teaches them that they have to earn it, and I don’t know.

Tessa (Springborough, MUSD): Using their imagination. It’s entertaining. It’s gee; you should see their faces when they’re up there. It’s so cute. Can’t think of a word. There was just two little girls singing yesterday, that’s why it totally made me happy and I just sat there for a few minutes and watched them. I think it… I don’t know. I’ll have to come back to that, yes.

Interviewer: Sure, okay.
Tessa: I know what I want to say, but I can’t just say it.

Interviewer: In that regard again, reading, which of these program goals is reading related to?  
Aria (Lilybluff, MUSD): Probably socialization and educational support. Some kids might think it’s fun, but I don’t know.

Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec): Which again goes back to them sharing, like when I told you before. That was the first time I really saw, hey this bigger kid picks on
this other kid and now they’re best friends because they’re helping each other out in the

game. Which I thought was wonderful and I think that’s really what impressed me the

most. Other people can say what they want about computers, being technology or

whatever but I think that social aspect and helping two people communicate to solve a

puzzle or problem or game. I think that’s one of the most surprising educational things.

While the directors were often able to elaborate upon the given activities within their programs,

they occasionally had difficulty recalling specifically how the activity was related to intended

outcomes. Considering a majority of the directors, five (out of seven) from MUSD and four (out

of four) from CB Rec, included references to uncertain relationships, it is clear that this was a

common occurrence. It is unclear, however, as to whether there were differences between the two

organizations as to how prevalent this was.

**Intentional development.** Interestingly, all seven MUSD directors identified at least one

form of intentional development within the associations between activities and goals, but none of

the CB Rec directors included any intentional references. Within these discussions, directors

made reference to providing structure, “scaffolding,” or progressing activities targeted at

particular goals (or guiding themes). For example:

Janelle (Birchridge): Multi-cultural, that would be explore, educate and empower. How

so? Do you want to know how so? Okay. We explore our world around us and our

environments and the people that are in our neighborhoods, so we talk about that. Then

we educate on different cultures and we talk about that throughout our themes depending

on when it falls, as well as it’s one of our social skills that when somebody sees

somebody that’s different or they ask questions about somebody that’s different … Or

even let’s just take a negative situation like a mocking situation, and use that as an

educational component and turn it around and say, “If somebody is different, does that

make them bad,” that kind of thing.

Tessa (Springborough): It’s a learning process.

Interviewer: Okay. How so?

Tessa: Well, they’re talking about how much money it would take to buy a turkey

and how much money we would have to every child bring in, so we have to figure out

those math skills. We have somebody who’s our treasurer. She’s in charge of the money

and tells the kids how much more we need. We’ve talked about if we have two families

and we’re trying to serve so many people, then how much food do we need for each

family to bring in. We’ve looked at like the paper sales to compare the prices and what

stores have them cheaper and stuff like that.
Interviewer:  Are there any other … does it hit any of these other goals?
Aria (Lilybluff): Educational support, it does too. This month, we’re learning about animals, so we learn a little bit of animals, then do some activities like games, a contest or something, where they had to be the animal or they have to know the characteristics of something, so it goes with that, too.

Eden (Roebrook): This year … for the last couple of years, we have been doing an activity centralized on a theme, and last year, it was “Route 66,” so we followed the route along Route 66 and we visited a state each month and we learned about, not only what's important … why Route 66 was important to that area, but also their State flag, their bird, and other states’ symbols.
This year we are doing “The Magic School Bus,” which is a series of books and it has not only to do with arts and crafts, but also, it has a lot, basically, to do with science. We are trying to incorporate the books. We read the story … we read various stories over the month, and then we've been doing more science experiments with the kids.

The description of intentional associations between activities and goals was the clearest difference between the two organizations—all seven directors from the school-based programs included at least one reference, while none of the four directors from the community-based programs included a reference while discussing the activity-to-goal associations.

**Research Question 2 –** What types of information do site directors use to inform their work?

**Hypotheses**

*Previous experience* will be a primary source of information site directors draw upon while designing and implementing program activities. Previous experience will be comprised of both prior involvement as a child in similar programs, as well as prior work experience in similar youth-serving organizations.

*Research* will be identified as a source of information, but it will not be a primary source. The extent to which it is identified will be moderated by the director’s background (i.e., previous experience, education).

**Information use to inform practice**

Analyzing the types of information directors draw upon to inform their practice was difficult, as there were a number of interactions amongst types of information. Rarely were
individual types of information referenced when referring to elements within the director models. The following are categories and themes that emerged from the director descriptions of their use of information within their programs: (1) director-centered information, (2) site-specific information, (3) organizational information, and (4) external information.

**Director-centered information.**

The content analysis of the interview data revealed various categories of information stemming from who the director was (Table 6 summarizes the results by ASP organization). Ranging from personal beliefs and background to educational training, elements of director-centered information appeared to originate in the director as an individual—apart from the program. Themes within this broader category include: (a) belief, (b) personal preference, (c) experience (as a professional), (d) personal background, (e) professional development, (f) education, (g) experience (as a former participant).

**Belief.** Throughout the interviews, it became apparent that the directors had strong philosophical beliefs about what should be incorporated within their programs. Using stems like, “I feel…” or “I believe…” all eleven of the directors made at least one reference to personal beliefs influencing the design and implementation of their programs. Examples of beliefs informing practice include:

Juliette (Foxwell, MUSD): We feel like they learn through whatever they're playing. There's learning involved. They're learning things as they're playing.

Aria (Lilybluff, MUSD): It might not be everybody’s philosophy, but kids are here a long time. I want them to like coming and I want them to have fun with what they’re doing. As a bonus, then they get to learn about socialization, or learn something educational, or learn how to accomplish something.

Eden (Roebrook, MUSD): I felt that children need to learn that they can be independent, that they don’t have to have somebody always entertaining them, that they can get cards out and play their own game of cards, or sit and draw a picture or read a book, and not always have to have somebody next to them.
Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec): Exposure to more interest. I think that's kind of like an universal. Everyone kind of wants to share their experiences and interests, but I think … At least for me, I get excited about science articles and what not, so I kind of share that. One a personal level, I'm really looking for that, but I think everyone, to some degree, is doing that too.

In addition to beliefs informing practices, there were also incidences of beliefs competing with other sources of information. When describing the use of a homework time in her program, Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD) state that she believed it wasn’t the most important thing. She stated the following:

It's a need from the parents. If it wasn't for the parents wanting it, I don't think we would do it in the program because we feel that there's other enriching activities they could be doing, and there's more learning coming from other things than just homework. They're just doing the same thing that they're doing at school if they're sitting there for an hour and just doing it over.

We have many other things that they can learn from as well. It's funny because for years they've been trying to get away from doing homework at all, but it seems to be sticking with it. We do it for an hour, but we limit it at an hour.

If they choose to do it after that, that's fine. We move on with our day because we feel there's other things that they can learn from as well.

Also within the discussion of beliefs, a common theme emerging from the directors (four from MUSD, and three from CB Rec) was incorporating elements based on a particular belief of what was “good for kids.” Examples of this philosophy are highlighted in the following excerpts:

Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): We try and get parents when we can because that’s really awesome for the kids too.

Tessa (Springborough, MUSD): Physical activity, why we do it because kids need to be active. They need to get out and do exercise and enjoy after being in school six hours. They’re able to learn like we’ve been playing tennis that somebody wanted to learn how to play tennis. I went and bought rackets at the good will and the love it and they couldn’t hit the ball when we first started school and now they can hit it back and forth to each other. I mean, just that learning process of them learning to pump. Our little down girl couldn’t pump and the day she did we were calling other people. They know her and I’m like so and so knows how to … so those kind of things are kind of cool. The physical activity, it’s healthy for them. Oh, that’s it.
Whether referencing beliefs as to what was beneficial for participants, or indicating conflicts
between practices and personal feelings, beliefs were the most prominent influence described by
the directors during their interviews. Considering all eleven directors included at least one
reference to personal beliefs influencing their practices, there is no indication that there was a
difference between the two organizations as to prevalence of this theme.

**Personal preference.** Closely related to beliefs were director preferences. Instead of
encompassing philosophical undertones, preferences were related to choices individual directors
made. Eight directors indicated personal preferences within the design of their programs. For
example:

Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): Normally, science is an individual site thing and it goes …
My science theme, that was an individual one. I worked with my assistant lead teacher,
and then I’ve asked my other sites to highlight different activities. But my actual, my
science theme, in addition to my curriculum, is a personal choice at my site.

Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec): Also just what our strengths are. I think I’ve
definitely tried to get the kids to do more arts and crafts related stuff. Which I think
annoys some kids because they’re not into that stuff, whereas I think conversely back
when [Supervisor] was running the show.

Kennedy (Welworth Community Center, CB Rec): Manners, I think, is something we
started enforcing recently. We’ve had a huge problem with them leaving their trash
outside and thinking it’s okay to throw it on the ground. That’s kind of where we started
enforcing manners. We pass out snack here, too, and they weren’t saying please and
thank you. That got annoying to us, so every time someone grabs snack, we say “please”
and “thank you” … we have them say it.

While personal preferences were referenced when discussing why various elements were
incorporated within the programs, personal preferences were also discussed as to how they
differed from program elements. For example:

Aria (Lilybluff, MUSD): Sports and arts, reading, I don’t really prefer that. I know how
to read ... just kidding. I’m a good reader, but I don’t … I think it’s good for the kids. If I
was at home, I would never sit there and read, ever. Here, I do.
While closely related to the belief theme, personal preferences were indicative of the choices directors made as opposed to philosophical promptings. Across the two organization types, six directors from MUSD and two directors from CB Rec included references to individual choices made within the descriptions of their program models, so this theme may be more related to school-based settings when compared to community-based activities.

**Experience (professional).** Eight directors referenced drawing upon their professional experience within their practices. Important to note, however, experience seemed to interact with other types of information, so it was hard to decipher its influence over practice irrespective of other information sources. Some examples of references to professional experience include:

Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): When I wanted that to be implemented, it was important because I had a lot of children that were going to that, that had lived in their cars, or living at House of Hope, or having drug dependent parents, or in general not a very good home life. I was encountered with social workers a lot. I've dealt a lot with that, having to be a witness for that.

Aria (Lilybluff, MUSD): The schools emphasize it, but the longer I’ve worked here, the more you realize that kids who, some of them do have an opportunity to do other sports and get some sort of exercise, but some don’t. It’s good for them. They like it, eventually. You’ll find some sport. You try enough sports, somebody like something. They all don’t like the same thing, but usually we have them try a new game or sport. After ten minutes … if it’s baseball, you can take longer than that. We don’t make them play, but, “Try this for 10 minutes then, if you don’t want to play …” a couple of them don’t and most of them stay. Every day, “What’s the game? What’s the game we’re playing? What’s the game?”

Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec): That’s tough, because sometimes I like spaghetti method you know, just fling everything at the wall and see what sticks. Other times I can be very much a cynic and I think based on work experience, you get to know what works with kids and what … especially our specific audience. I wouldn’t claim to know what works at Elden Park or Welworth or Fairmont. But here I think because we’ve had that peer relationship and work experience and based on safety, it dictates what we can do and what we can’t, I don’t know.

As with Scarlett’s example above, professional experience was described while reflecting on a desire to implement particular activities (i.e., personal preference), as well as responding to the individual needs of participants in her program (i.e., youth participants theme described below).
While professional experience was linked to other information sources, it was not indicated by all directors—six directors from MUSD and two from CB Rec included references to relying upon professional experience, while describing their program models. Perhaps, like the personal preference theme, the use of professional experiences may be more indicative of school-based programs.

**Personal background.** Beyond professional experience, directors also referenced utilizing additional personal information within their practices. In particular, seven of the eleven directors, made individual references to personal background influencing their practices. The following excerpts capture various components to their thoughts:

Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): I just personally, I believe in reading. I have four brothers, and one of my brothers said, “You never…” I don’t know where he got it from, probably Mark Twain, “You’re never lonely or bored if you have a book, a good book.”

Tessa (Springborough, MUSD): And then as my daughter went through school and seeing her choices that she made, she actually taught me to do a lot of volunteerism and I … then with her working with the kids here, and seeing their enjoyment, so I think it was something from my life that just came here.

Kayden (Elden Park, CB Rec): The way we plan is we always have some kind of art and craft during the week and some kind of activity, so it’s kind of a requirement. But the kids like it. I always liked arts and crafts when I was younger.

Similar to professional experience, as the directors had to reflect on their past experiences to describe the influence of this information source, personal background was also closely connected with other themes. More than professional experience, however, references within this theme were indicated more frequently within the community-based programs (three of four directors from CB Rec), as compared to the school-based settings (four of seven directors from MUSD).

**Professional development.** Five directors referenced trainings and professional development workshops interacting with practice. Interestingly, however,
Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): I just went to an art and science training. Discount School Supply was the one donating the items so we had a coffee filter, and we were using these water color paints, and we actually did the project. We put salt on them to incorporate the science part of how it made the marks and how salt soaks up the liquid. You could see the transformation. We were doing it and we could come back and do it with them. I think those are sometimes good because depending on who you are, and what you're coming from, and your background sometimes you don't always see the whole picture unless you're doing it. That way you can see how it plays out.

Aria (Lilybluff, MUSD): There’s training on music with the kids and how it helps their brains develop differently and that’s through the classes and trainings. We don’t actually dance, I would die. They give you some ideas and the kids are way … and especially now, with all the technology… You learn that it’s supposed to be important because it helps kids' brains develop differently and think differently. You just have fun doing it, too, so it has some advantage. I’m not saying we put on a ballet or anything, but silly little dances or whatever.

Kayden (Elden Park, CB Rec): During our training, we’re given scenarios. We’re never alone with a kid, just basic things like that. We’re also CPR trained and all of that. That’s literal safety. I think that just really is pressed upon, safety first for everything.

While not a particularly prominent information source within the director interviews, there was little difference between the two organizations as to the prevalence (three directors from MUSD, two directors from CB Rec) of professional development influencing practices within the individual models. From Aria’s example, her reference to receiving information about “brain development” was the only indication as to the potential inclusion of theory-based professional development, within the items in this theme. Other references to professional development, or trainings, were related to the development of individual activity ideas.

**Education.** In addition to professional development trainings, four directors (all from MUSD) referenced their educational background in their practices. For example:

Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): I'm still in college so I'm still learning a lot from that. My major is Human Development, with an emphasis in the counseling. I was going to do education, but I changed that. I’ve learned everything from infancy to adults and how they relate. I try to incorporate a lot of what I've learned from school, but I enjoyed the trainings because they're more hands on, and they teach you how that you're doing it hands-on so that when you go do it with them the same way. I enjoyed that a lot.
Aria (Lilybluff, MUSD): I learned about those in the human development classes and then through trainings as well. What the actual curriculum we do, you get a few ideas from the classes. As you know that you're supposed to try to incorporate that, then you think of stuff that goes along with it. Really, a lot of times, you just make it up.

Similar to professional development influencing program practices, education was not frequently indicated within the director interviews. In contrast, however, all of the references in this theme were provided by directors from MUSD, so this may indicate education being more influential for practices within school-based programs as opposed to community-based programs.

**Experience (participant).** In a few instances, four of the directors described participating in similar (if not the same) programs as youth. Examples of these occurrences are as follows:

Aria (Lilybluff, MUSD): Where did I learn that from? I don’t know growing up. I went to daycare when I was little and I remember the fun stuff that we did.

Kayden (Elden Park, CB Rec): I think that’s more personal. I know when … I used to come to camp. There used to be day camps. That was during summer. I used to come and I thought they were the coolest people. I looked up to them and I ended up becoming one of them, so I just feel like we need to set examples for the kids, definitely.

With the prominence of after-school programs throughout the country, it’s not surprising to observe references to directors participating in similar programs in their youth, but this was not a frequent occurrence within the data. Considering two directors from MUSD, and two directors from CB Rec mentioned participating as a youth, it is difficult to indicate whether or not there is a difference between the two organization types as to the influence of the director’s participation as a youth.

**Site-specific information**

While the above categories of information use were dependent upon who the director was at a personal level, the following categories are related to the sites in which the directors work (see Table 7 for a summary). Themes within this broader category include: (a) youth participants,
(b) logistical pragmatics, (c) tradition, (d) fun, (e) goals, (f) participant families, (g) school affiliations, and (h) trial and error.

**Youth participants.** Either describing observations and interactions with the youth in their programs, or identifying instances of the youth asking for what they need directly, all eleven directors discussed using the youth themselves as a piece of information when deciding what should be included within their programs.

Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): Science is in everything that we do, to think about our bodies, Earth, our atmosphere, and for them to know everything, and how it works. Kids want to know how it works. It's not necessarily, you can tell them, but until they're physically, actively doing it and it's very hands on, that's how I think that children actually learn well.

Tessa (Springborough, MUSD): I believe we’re a really good support staff to them because they talk to us about things. With the good citizenship doing stuff with them, they love it. They are just the … they don’t have much … that’s what I’m telling you, my kids don’t have a lot of money but they are the first ones to come and give something. It’s really cool.

Eden (Roebrook, MUSD): I also learn by … seeing if the kids enjoy the activity, then I know we could do it again, and if they don’t enjoy the activity we won't do it again, so it's like having the children's input as well as my staff members’. Some of the group games, when we try to do new group games, if the kids don’t really like it or they don’t understand it, then we'll know next time not to do it.

The above examples reflect the director’s observation of students in her program and then using this information to inform ongoing practices. Related, but different, the examples below describe instances where the youth themselves are indicating what they would like to see within the programs they are participating in.

Juliette (Foxwell, MUSD): Five or six days this year, and each day … right before it, they get to raise their hand and put an idea for a minimum day theme, and we put it on the board and then we vote on the favorite ones.

Lucy (Cedarton, MUSD): It was cool because I can relate to it. They were, they totally knew what I was talking about. Like I said, it just really has to do with what they’re looking at, at the time, too, because I can come up with a bunch of ideas, but if they’re not into it, it’s lame.
Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec): Sometimes even the kids have ideas. Which I think is good, because I think even if it’s a bad idea or maybe not the best idea, just trying to make it work brings a lot of respect from the kids to you.

Raelynn (Farimont Community Center, CB Rec): Outdoor games. A lot of the boys, some of them over there, they do play afterschool sports, where their parents pay extra money for them to be on baseball. They say, “Can we practice with you guys? Can you show us how to do this or do that?” There are a couple of kids who play soccer and they’ll continually ask us, “Can you help us do this? Can you help me practice?”

Within the site-specific information category, the youth participants were the most prominent theme. Considering all eleven directors interviewed included at least one reference to utilizing their observations of participants, or involving youth within the decision making process, there is no difference between the two organization types as to the influence on program practices.

Logistical pragmatics. Ten of the directors indicated logistical considerations when considering the design of their programs. In particular, the directors mentioned having to be pragmatic when determining what to do with their participants given the resources available (e.g., number of staff, time allotments, size of the site). Examples of the logistical pragmatic considerations are as follows:

Juliette (Foxwell, MUSD): We used to do where we check the kids in, and then immediately they went to homework or outside. Now, we do it where we check them in and they come in and we do a group time. I talk to them, because I found out that the later I did group time, the more kids were gone. Their parents were picking them up, so they didn't get to hear the things that I needed to say to them because they were gone. I said, "I think doing group time first when they just get out of school, they'll hear what I need to say before they go home." I had to change that. That's how I learned through doing it that what works and what doesn't work.

Juliette (Foxwell, MUSD): By learning through doing it. You find out what works and what doesn't work for your particular site, because a better site might not be able to do certain things that we can do because we have a smaller group, so it just depends on what's going on at the time, and how you set things up. Other sites have four people, so they can split things up a little more, whereas we only have two people. One of us has to be in here doing homework, and the other one has to be outside doing … she's outside there by herself. She has to oversee that whole playground, whereas if you had two or three people out there, one could be doing a game over here, one could be doing this, and one is roaming around. We're the only ones, so we're standing there watching everything that's going on. It's just different for each site.
Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec): [Describing the use of indoor activities due to lack of outdoor space] It’s one of those things that you kind of have to do, because again sports aren’t that accessible. Indoor activities is giving those kids with a lot of pent up energy to expel it in musical chairs or four corners where they can be somewhat safe in an indoor environment but still have fun.

Raelynn (Fairmont Community Center, CB Rec): Some of the other things they do here - we do get a majority of boys here. There’re not that many girls, so again, they’d rather be outside in most cases. When I got here, again, that’s what they said, “Take them outside. Use their energy.”

The above examples highlight the various components to the logistical pragmatics site-specific theme. As with some of the previously mentioned themes, this theme was closely related to other themes, so it was difficult to isolate its influence. Instead, it appeared to be supplemental to either previous experiences utilizing trial and error or from reflecting on the youth participants themselves. In one instance, however, Eden (from Roebrook, MUSD) indicated logistical challenges to implementing desired program elements, “Our supervisor wanted us to have computers, but they don’t have the budget to put up a bunch of computers for the kids to play with, but they asked for parent donations.”

Considering six of the seven directors from MUSD, and all four directors from CB Rec, described logistical considerations while discussing their program models, it is unclear as to whether there is a difference between the two organization types. Instead, it appears that an experience-based, resource-dependent pragmatic approach to program design and implementation is a prominent strategy within these settings.

**Tradition.** Either mentioning practices that were in place prior to their start in the particular position within the program, or merely referencing ongoing practices from the past more generally, ten of the directors indicated tradition influenced day-to-day practices within their programs. Examples include:

Juliette (Foxwell, MUSD): As far as how the program is set up, when I came here 15 years ago, it was set up completely different. The person who was running it had a certain
way of doing it, and I wasn't happy with the way they were running it, so I came in and I
revamped the whole way we did things.

Juliette (Foxwell, MUSD): [Discussing a yearly Halloween party] It's kind of a tradition
here ever since I've been here. I've been here for 15 years. I put it in the upper graders’
hands like kind of empowerment. "You get to plan this. This is your baby. I will guide
you and I will provide you with certain things, but you guys have to plan it. You have to
bring this stuff from home to do it. It's your baby. You have to take ownership of it and do
it. If you failed to do it, then you fail to do it and you didn't follow through, but it's your
thing. You're doing it for them." They all look forward to doing it because they're here in
first, in second, and third, and all of sudden, they get to fourth grade, "We get to do the
haunted house," so they get excited about it.

Tessa (Springborough, MUSD): So last year, my daughter was in high school and she’s
do community service and she always used to come to my room. She’s like, “Your kids
do it with me.” “I’m like probably.” We did a costume drive last year for Orangewood
and so my kids this year got all these costumes, it was really cool.

The kids this year said, “Are we having a Halloween party?” Yes, whatever, and they’re
like how about a costume drive? I’m like, “Oh, no, Danielle’s in college.” “We’re not
doing this year.” They’re like oh, and they just kept asking me. There were several of
them who asked me throughout days and I just thought, if these kids who really don’t
have anything, you know, their parents are … I mean, their parents drive older cars. Some
of them come and walk on the bus, come from the bus. If they’re willing to give, how
important is it and to us to encourage that, so that it can go with them as they’re here in
elementary school to go into junior high.

With the above examples, the directors referred to individual elements of their program in
comparison as to when they assumed their particular role within the programs. In Juliette’s case,
she apparently revamped her approach to the entire program, establishing her own 15-year
tradition. In the other examples, individual activities were created previously but have continued
on throughout the years.

Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): One of the things we’ve always said is play is so important.
That’s one of the huge pushes of our program always has been, the play and the social
skills. Not open-ended play, we have directed. Open-ended is huge. You need to have it.
We don’t have enough of it. We like to scaffold those kind of environments, those
experiences for kids, so that they are able to experience it on their own level.

Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): I think that's always been the first item that's been in
afterschool programs. Obviously, tutoring, too. I think that has changed, too. At first it
was more tutoring, and now it's become more just helping, and having the children do it's
more individually, and maybe checking the work because we don't have the time.
We have 30, 40 kids in here on a Monday and it dwindles down throughout the week until Thursday, but it's quite a bit. We don't have that time for that one on one, but the homework has definitely always been a basis of afterschool programs.

Similar to Juliette’s example, the above quotes are reflective of the design of the program more generally, but there is no mention of a timeframe as to when the approach was developed. Instead, there appears to be a reference to a guiding “after-school tradition” influencing the directors’ practices.

Whether referencing longstanding individual elements, or tradition-based guiding principles more generally, the influence of tradition within the description of the various programs was a prominent theme described by directors. With it being a prominent theme within the data, however, there was little indication that there was a difference between the two organization types as to its influence—all seven directors from MUSD, and three directors from CB Rec mentioned tradition in one form or another.

**Fun.** Nine of the eleven directors spoke about integrating particular elements within their program models because they were “fun.” Typically, the descriptions involved utilizing student enjoyment (as evidenced by smiles and laughter) as an indicator of support for continuing practices. Examples of fun influencing the design and implementation of individual elements include:

Juliette (Foxwell, MUSD): Because it's fun, and they expect those things because this Valentine's Day, you expect to be able to bring your friends Valentines and things like that, so they expect it, so you do it, and it's fun.

Interviewer: Any other things or when we think about fun, how might that …

Juliette: Come on, everything's fun.

Interviewer: I can't answer for …

Juliette: They don't like group time very much. Games are fun. Art is fun. They love fun. We try to make everything fun for them because, usually, if it's not fun, they're not going to do it. Homework time is not very much fun so that's why they fight back not to do homework [laughs] but, yes, so … That's it.

Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec): Sports is like a treat and it’s something that brings all the kids together because you split; if 10 kids want to play you have a five on
five game of basketball. It’s just bonding, teaching kids basic skills. I think it’s just a treat for them, it’s like an excursion doing a sports activity when you’re on an excursion to the park.

Kayden (Elden Park, CB Rec): The way we plan is we always have some kind of art and craft during the week and some kind of activity, so it’s kind of a requirement. But the kids like it.

From the examples above, the directors described using student enjoyment as feedback regarding the choice and implementation of various activities within their respective programs. In contrast, however, the examples below highlight the director’s own enjoyment of the activities to support their integration within the program.

Tessa (Springborough, MUSD): [Discussing drama time] Using their imagination. It’s entertaining. It’s gee; you should see their faces when they’re up there. It’s so cute. Can’t think of a word. There was just two little girls singing yesterday, that’s why it totally made me happy and I just sat there for a few minutes and watched them. I think it …. I don’t know. I’ll have to come back to that, yes.

Aria (Lilybluff, MUSD): You learn from obviously, them having it be a component in all schools, all schools. I'm trying to think, all daycares, plus it’s fun and I love sports, by far, my favorite thing. I’m not good at all of them, but I want them to know how, what they’re playing, what they’re doing, why this rule is this way. It’s not long-term like, “Here’s how you have to do this, but here’s the basic rundown of football, except we don’t tackle here.” When we're playing soccer, you can’t flag tackle or whatever. I think it’s important, too, because the kids get out and do something and they have fun.

Either taking the form of student enjoyment, or the director’s own enjoyment, “fun” was a prominent theme within the director interviews. Given the fact that six directors from MUSD, and three directors from CB Rec, included at least one fun-related basis for including elements within their respective programs, it is difficult to draw any conclusions as to any potential differences between the two organization types as to its prevalence.

**Goals.** Nine directors indicated that they chose activities specifically to achieve specified goals. Additionally, the directors discussed intentionally including elements within their programs based on intended purposes. Examples of these thoughts include:
Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): We don’t want to … As far as our exposure to multi-culturalisms or we try and incorporate things in our books, on our shelf, in our activities, just so that it’s something that they see, it’s something that they know. Something that they’re getting to learn, it’s part of their environment but then we like to highlight multi-cultural items, depending … a lot of times it will go along with our theme.

Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): Some of them play really hard and as they get older, they’re getting into that phase of smelliness is what I call it. That’s definitely something that we talk about to and incorporate that with science, definitely. These are the basis of what we do every day. Obviously, we elaborate on certain things if we’re focusing on that and it depends on them.

Aria (Lilybluff, MUSD): It’s a big one. I really try to do lots of … we make sure they’re safe and that they’re doing stuff that is towards a goal.

Interestingly, all seven directors from MUSD referenced goals while describing why individual elements within their program models were included, but only two (of four) directors from CB Rec indicated their goals during this phase of the interviews. Perhaps, this difference is reflective of a potential difference between the two organization types in how goals are utilized to inform activity designs and implementation strategies.

**Participant families.** Eight of the participants included parents (or families more generally) as influential to the design of particular elements within their programs. Sometimes the reference was related to parents asking for specific components—especially linked to including homework assistance. Other times, the reference was related to including specific elements, because of something students were not able to get from their family environments. For example:

Kennedy (Welworth Community Center, CB Rec): We do homework because I know that when they’re here, all they want to do is play, but their parents are not okay with that. The parents would complain, like they don’t do it at home. When they get here we make sure they do it. That way they can continue to come to the program.

Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): Social-emotional? Other than a child really needs to build their social skills and there isn’t a lot of … Let’s face it, kids are here most of the day and there’s a lot of social skills that they aren’t learning from their family life anymore. We are a surrogate-type of family in a lot of instances. Not only, I mean we have great
parents, don’t get me wrong, but there are a lot of dynamics and things that they don’t learn because they don’t have neighbors like what they used to have.

Tessa (Springborough, MUSD): Just to continue teaching them from what they were taught in school and just kind of reinforcing it because again, a lot of them, their parents work until 6:00 or 5:50. By the time they get home, they don’t have that opportunity to their parents to sit down and do homework with them. I have a lot of Spanish speaking families who the parents don’t speak English. Whatever if we can help them in our daily activities to teach them a little bit more, to reinforce what they’ve learned in the class, you know? They can even help their parents with it hopefully.

Lucy (Cedarton, MUSD): Again, because we have some families who are single parent families or dad might not be there or whatever the case may be, we try to make it a place where they feel comfortable to come to us with their issues. We try to make it something that they feel friendly and inviting enough for them. You know what I mean?

Eden (Roebrook, MUSD): Again, my supervisors and parents, and a lot of the kids, they don’t … because of the way that today's society is, at least with these parents, they are always on the go, and some of these kids are here until six o'clock at night, so if we don’t give them the support here, then they don’t have a lot of support at home, so they need someone who they can rely on to help them get their homework done.

Whether parents specifically asked for individual program elements, or whether directors observed what participants “were not getting at home,” families were indicated as influential to program design in the various settings. Considering seven directors from MUSD, as opposed to one director from CB Rec, described the influence of families within their models, there appears to be a difference between the two organization types in this information use theme.

**School affiliation.** Six directors mentioned interacting with school personnel when discussing their programs. Either trying to mirror the practices of the school day, or even attempting to offer activities youth may not be exposed to during the traditional school hours, the directors indicated affiliations with school sites influenced their practices. Some examples include:

Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): We do have literacy. We do read and we try to mirror what’s going on at school by letting them do reading counts and things like that so there are those aspects as well.
Tessa (Springborough, MUSD): Just to continue teaching them from what they were taught in school and just kind of reinforcing it because again, a lot of them, their parents work until 6:00 or 5:50. By the time they get home, they don’t have that opportunity to their parents to sit down and do homework with them. I have a lot of Spanish speaking families who the parents don’t speak English. Whatever if we can help them in our daily activities to teach them a little bit more, to reinforce what they’ve learned in the class, you know? They can even help their parents with it hopefully.

Aria (Lilybluff, MUSD): It’s [homework support] part of our curriculum, our school-based curriculum from the school district. Being on-site, you see how much the teachers … the teachers have so many things they have to accomplish in a day with less help, more kids and the kids need more help. You see that because then we also talk to the parents, “He didn’t get his homework done. Can you help him do this, because I couldn’t come till late last night.” You get it from all ends, you know you have to do it. You see the teachers need them to do it, you see the kids need help doing it and the parents can’t get it done, so there we are.

Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec): I think also, going back to when we met with the Principal, understanding the goals of the school so that we could all align our … because our interests do align. Making our short term goals align with their short term goals, as well long term I guess. She told us about projects that were coming up.

The above examples emphasize the desire of site directors to mirror the practices of the participants’ schools, whereas the examples below indicate a desire to offer program elements that were not provided by the local schools.

Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): In after school program, we have the same children for six years. We have to be fresh every year. Everything that we’re teaching them, even though it has to do with their grade, we don't want it to mirror what they're doing in school. We always have to come up with these new ways to come across, and that's the hardest part of our job I think, if anything.

Eden (Roebrook, MUSD): Yeah. In classes they don’t get to do a lot of fun activities now, because the teachers all have state standards that they have to teach, so a lot of the fun things have gone away.

Perhaps not surprisingly, given their location of operation, the school-based directors were more likely (five of the seven directors from MUSD) to reference school affiliations while describing the design of their programs, as compared to the community-based directors (one of four directors from CB Rec).
**Trial and error.** Five directors referenced relying upon trial and error to see “what works” within their programs. More specifically, they discussed trying various types of activities to see what their students liked. Examples of their sentiments include:

Aria (Lilybluff, MUSD): The schools emphasize it, but the longer I’ve worked here, the more you realize that kids who, some of them do have an opportunity to do other sports and get some sort of exercise, but some don’t. It’s good for them. They like it, eventually. You’ll find some sport. You try enough sports, somebody like something. They all don’t like the same thing, but usually we have them try a new game or sport. After ten minutes … if it’s baseball, you can take longer than that. We don’t make them play, but, “Try this for 10 minutes then, if you don’t want to play …” a couple of them don’t and most of them stay. Every day, “What’s the game? What’s the game we’re playing? What’s the game?”

Eden (Roebrook, MUSD): I like to talk to the other lead teachers, to share ideas, because if we are able to share ideas, we know things will work and not work, or how we can change them to fit our program. I also learn by … seeing if the kids enjoy the activity, then I know we could do it again, and if they don’t enjoy the activity we won’t do it again, so it's like having the children's input as well as my staff members’. Some of the group games, when we try to do new group games, if the kids don’t really like it or they don’t understand it, then we'll know next time not to do it.

Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec): That’s tough, because sometimes I like spaghetti method you know, just fling everything at the wall and see what sticks.

Raelynn (Fairmont Community Center, CB Rec): It’s mostly just trial and error, to be honest with you. We try things out - if it works, it works. If it doesn’t, then we move on to something else, especially with these kids. I know because I have visited other sites throughout my couple of years here, and we’re all different, to be honest with you.

In contrast to the goal-oriented program practices described primarily by the school-based directors, the use of a trial and error approach was more prominently utilized by community-based directors—two directors in MUSD, as compared to three directors from CB Rec.

**Organizational information**

Progressing away from the individual directors and after-school sites, there were pieces of information that reflected organizational practices across sites (see Table 8 for a summary). In these instances, evidence of site-to-site interactions, or organizational policies and procedures independent of individual site operations, were included within the director descriptions of why
particular elements were included in their models. Themes within this broader category include: (a) knowledge sharing, (b) organizational requirements, and (c) supervisory influence.

**Knowledge sharing.** The primary organization-related information use practice was related to knowledge sharing between colleagues, as ten directors referenced exchanging ideas with other professionals within their organizations. Some examples include:

Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): The peer reading is something that I’ve implemented here at my site. It’s a collaboration. Other lead teachers, we talk about what we’re doing. Once again, if something comes up that is really cool or stood out is if it’s worth really well, we share. It’s part of a literacy component and literacy component is a program curriculum thing that we have to have.

Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): Actually we make them as lead teachers but we do come together and we try … Because we’re really trying to collaborate to make a stronger, well-rounded program overall because we’re a large program with 27 sites and with that, there’s a lot of fluctuation. We’re a great standard but as far as the enrichment, the really great stuff that could be added to a program, it’s really awesome if you’re able to take from other people that you work with and help with them to really enrich your program.

Juliette (Foxwell, MUSD): Lottery tickets, I don’t know. Somebody else was doing it and I thought it was a neat idea to do.

Lucy (Cedarton, MUSD): I also try to draw from the other leads that I work with. They, especially the ones that have been here a long time, they have, they’re just full of knowledge and projects and ideas and other prospective are definitely important. I draw a lot from people I work with.

Lucas (CB Rec): There’s also many rec leaders, especially the ones that have been here the longest, they’re studying to be teachers or whatever and so they’ve run into stuff. They’re always willing to share it, it’s one of the nice things I think, at least in our situation, everyone’s very willing to share ideas. It used to be that, when we did our planning meetings that we’d share ideas. I think we still do that during the summer now but lately, during the school year it’s kind of focused on each center individually. I hope that answers that.

Whether hearing “what works” at other sites, or brainstorming alternative practices during meetings with others, the directors described relatively collegial atmospheres within the two organizations. Considering all seven directors in MUSD, and three (of four) directors in CB Rec, indicated knowledge sharing was a prominent source of information to draw upon in the design
and implementation of their respective programs, however, it is difficult to find any differences between the two organizations in this theme.

**Organizational requirements.** Beyond the sharing of information among colleagues within the two organizations, seven directors indicated individual elements within their programs were related to requirements established at the organizational level. Examples of the director thoughts are:

Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): Yes, we’re working on that as an organization, it’s one of our components. We always worked on good character traits and things like that as part of our social skills and our dynamics, but basically there’s programming out there and so we wanted to put it the digital component too. We wanted to broaden their horizon and have something concrete that we’re all working on together so that … and as well as the verbiage … I mean, citizenship, how often do we get to use those kind of things?

Juliette (Foxwell, MUSD): No. We all pretty much do … you're going to find that all of our sites pretty much do the same kind of format. We usually have a homework time. We have arts and crafts time. We have an organized group game time. It might be different how it's set up, but we all do those things. Most of us have a group time. We always have a snack time. All those things are … it's kind of the way our programs are set up to do. It's the way we're instructed to do.

Tessa (Springborough, MUSD): Oh, can I tell you because I have to?
Interviewer: That is a reason.
Tessa: It is part of our program.

Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center): Peer relationships. Sorry. I'm going to skip around. That was something that I've always had. That's something that, I don't want to say I came up with it. It's something that bothered me about teachers. I never liked calling teachers by their last name. I really wanted to develop that relationship as a friend, as a peer, not as a necessarily just a tutor or teacher. I think that's something that's kind of like, they've kind of driven home as well in this job. It's just the work environment. It's kind of geared towards that as well, so it kind of fosters it.

Similar to traditions established at the site-level, organization-level influences were described as ongoing practices across multiple sites. From Janelle’s and Juliette’s examples, there appeared to be a desire to organize the various sites behind a common, or consistent, vision for how individual sites would operate. Tessa’s example, however, indicates that there the requirements of the organization took precedent over individual site autonomy in regards to choosing what would
be included. Of the seven MUSD directors, five referenced some organizational requirements within their program descriptions, whereas two of the four CB Rec directors included organizational references. Perhaps, there is a slight difference in how the organizations influence individual site practices between school-based and community-based after-school organizations.

**Supervisorial influence.** While similar to organizational requirements, seven directors spoke directly about their immediate supervisor influencing programmatic offerings. Some examples include:

Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): Our supervisor incorporates a lot of … he keeps up on a lot of the stuff that’s going around. There’s a huge pressure with this educational extension of the day, which I believe, and I believe in extending and giving the kids the opportunity to get the work done that they are not getting done in school, and I think that’s where they’re … they have great intentions but a lot of these funded programs are really kind of losing the essence of what after-school should be because of the play component.

Eden (Roebrook, MUSD): The parents aren't so much concerned about group games. The supervisors, they'd like us to incorporate group games with the kids, so that way, they have structured time instead of just a free-for-all in the afternoon. We try to teach them skills, not only with the group games - we try to teach them different games that teachers with different skills could use.

Juliette (Foxwell, MUSD): Our supervisor feels very strongly about not solely focusing on homework and that all the things that we do in here have some learning.

Aria (Lilybluff, MUSD): Have you met my bosses [district supervisors]? They’re really nice people and our supervisor is about the nicest man in the world. They completely talk about safety all the time. As new stuff comes up where, “This is what you need to do to be safer here,” then we adjust our program, everybody does. That stuff is sent out to you, and then at your own site, you decide the rules that you have for each place.

Interviewer: I think you said the supervisor …

Kayden (Elden Park, CB Rec): Yes. His kids are actually in the program, so he knows how his kids are and, kids now days, like watching TV and playing video games. It is hot outside during summer, but he always wants us playing outside for health reasons, plus it’s just healthy for kids. Get sun. Because of that, we’ve come up with water games that kids enjoy.

Even though the directors described supervisorial influences similar to organizational requirements, the prevalence was slightly more favored by the community-based site directors.
(four of seven directors from MUSD, three of four directors from CB Rec). Compared to the relatively collegial atmospheres described in both organizations, with knowledge sharing from director to director, the community-based organization may be more hierarchical in terms of supervisorial influences over individual site practices.

**External influences**

The following categories relate to information that originated beyond the organizations themselves. Themes within this broader information use category include: (a) Internet, (b) local community, (c) time of year, (d) written materials, (e) educational policies, (f) contemporary culture and events, (g) research, and (h) funders. Table 9 summarizes the themes from this portion of the analysis.

**Internet.** When describing how elements were integrated into programmatic offerings, eight directors mentioned using the Internet during the process. Either referencing specific websites, or describing generalized searches for youth activities, the following excerpts highlight the director views toward the Internet’s influence over their programs:

Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): Also, teaching them how to be healthy. We do the "My Plate." I'm actually using a website called "Nourish Interactive." Basically, teaches them about updated food components like what grains, what food group they belong in, and how that is affecting their bodies, and physical education as well that website has a great combination of everything, you might want to check it out. There's computer games involved to on teaching them how to be physically healthy. I use that a lot.

Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec): Also I think just randomly I’ll find stuff on the Internet, I’ll just stumble across it or think of a good idea, like the marshmallow experiment.

While the number of directors from each organization who mentioned the Internet (five from MUSD, and three from CB Rec) makes it difficult to make conjectures as to the relative influence of Internet-based sources across the two organizations, the examples above show different approaches to finding and utilizing the information found online. The directors from
MUSD described more intentional approaches, while the directors from CB Rec discussed more haphazard approaches to utilizing Internet-based information.

**Local community.** Somewhat related to the families of youth participants, there were additional references to the surrounding communities influencing practices at seven sites. Ranging from interactions with other community professionals to generalized observations of the community environment, the following excerpts highlight some of the director thoughts:

Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): We wanted to pull out another thread, something that they can learn from, something that’s in their environment. We’re hoping to get some more animals as well. I had a snake at my other site but it stayed there because it was donated by one of the students. We have a mom that works at an outdoor science center activity thing in Long Beach. She’s come in. She was a guest speaker. When we talked about birds, she came in and talked about bird stuff, about local bird stuff about California birds that are native to California. Then we talked about habitats and the food. She actually brought owl pellets and they got to dissect those. That’s an individual site thing. That was reaching out to guest speakers.

Scarlett (Kingsridge, MUSD): Last year, I put together, from Orange County Department of Ed, a homeless child training. I had all the staff trained on that and how the Department of Ed gets involved. In our Title One schools, we have a lot of situations that we get encountered with. Up here, it's different. The demographics are different, but when I talk about these things I'm more in relation to them. I was down there for a long time. I just came here to this year.

Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec): I don’t think it’s something that’s written on paper or, hey you’re going to share science today. Although I think [community partner], with their science experiments they’ve been aiming directly at certain topics which I think is good too.

While both organizations served similar communities with similar demographics, the directors at MUSD were more likely (six of seven) to mention community-level influences on their program practices, as compared to the CB Rec directors (one of four). Considering the fact that the community-based directors operate their programs directly within the community itself, this result is somewhat counterintuitive.

**Time of year.** Five directors mentioned that the time of year was something they considered when choosing what went into their program. In particular, holidays were driving
forces within their decision making process. For example, Eden (Roebrook, MUSD) discussed studying bugs and spiders during the month of October to coincide with Halloween. Aria (Lilybluff, MUSD) also described integrating Christmas and Hanukah decorations into her arts activities during November and December. Another example is:

Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): Let’s say for November, for example, we have the Magic School Bus theme and then we have November. Within the November month segment, because they are broken down by month, we have fall, the seasons, with the emphasis on fall. Then we have Thanksgiving and harvest, which is what we’re working on. Today we’re doing corn, the history of corn, and then we’ll do a little bit of Native American stuff with names and things like that tomorrow and Friday.

As with the community-level influences, the time-of-year influences to program practices were more frequently described by the school-based directors (four from MUSD) as compared to the community-based directors (one from CB Rec). Perhaps, the holiday-dependent school calendar may have contributed to a higher prevalence within the school-based programs.

**Written materials.** Four of the MUSD directors (none of the CB Rec staff) described using various written materials within their programs. In particular, they mentioned using *The Magic School Bus* book series as their yearly “themes.” As they discussed the integration of the books within their programs, the directors mentioned collaborating with their colleagues at other sites within the same organization to rotate books and activities, so this theme is related to the knowledge sharing theme described above. Some examples of their thoughts include:

Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): The Magic School Bus, every book is different. We have the solar system, we’ve covered the ocean, and they do audio, and also we do a science project that goes along with it. The whole entire curriculum is tied into every way that each child learns and I think that would go for all of these.

Juliette (Foxwell, MUSD): No, we're focusing on owls this week. Every week, we're going to have a different focus of something that ties into November. We also are doing The Magic School Bus. We are incorporating the books into our programs and we're reading a book usually a book a week and the themes are focusing around those book titles and things like that. I'm not exactly sure what this week is.
While primarily limited to descriptions of *The Magic School Bus* series, the four MUSD directors were the only ones to describe the use of written materials to influence practices within their individual programs. Perhaps reflective of the knowledge sharing within the organization, the school-based programs may be more likely to utilize written materials when designing and implementing their program elements.

**Contemporary culture and events.** Related to the time of year, contemporary culture and events were mentioned within the discussions of three of the MUSD directors (none from CB Rec). As the interviews coincided with the national presidential election, the sites implemented a mock vote for the presidential candidates. Elaborating beyond the voting scenario, Lucy (Cedarton) also stated, “The themes, like I said, I try to look at media. I try to look at what the kids are talking about as well.” She appeared to rely upon contemporary culture to design and implement activities youth would be interested in. Other examples include:

Lucy (Cedarton, MUSD): The themes, like I said, I try to look at media. I try to look at what the kids are talking about as well. One month we just did Super Mario because that’s what the kids are interested in.

Ava (Lilybluff, MUSD): We did a voting thing, it’s super funny, on Election Day. They’ve learned all about voting and how you have to do this and all that kind of stuff.

Similar to the time of year theme described above, contemporary culture and events were influential (but not particularly frequently) to the design and implementation of practices within the school-based organization. Again, given the community-based organization’s operation within the community more generally, it is somewhat surprising that there were no references to contemporary events influencing practices in this setting.

**Educational policies.** Two directors (both from MUSD) discussed conceptual understandings of contemporary educational policies in relation to their program models. Examples include:
Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): Our supervisor incorporates a lot of … he keeps up on a lot of the stuff that’s going around. There’s a huge pressure with this educational extension of the day, which I believe, and I believe in extending and giving the kids the opportunity to get the work done that they are not getting done in school, and I think that’s where they’re … they have great intentions but a lot of these funded programs are really kind of losing the essence of what after-school should be because of the play component.

That’s part of being a well-rounded child, is being happy and being physically active and not just play outside physically, but even being inside and being creative. They’re losing a lot of that. See, with a lot of the after-school programs extending the day we have all of these components. We always have. It’s part of our enrichment, it’s part of what we like to do, to explore our environments and communities. But when you look to have an educational day, 12 hours of the day and you don’t have your art and you don’t have your physical activity and you don’t have self-expression and you don’t have music or movement, I think you’re cheating the kids out of a lot. We’re lucky that we can have all of these things in.

Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): The safety, there’s a program protocol in my place to maintain a healthy and safety environment. I guess health comes under the safety because we don’t want anything that’s going to endanger the students’ health. It’s a district standard. Even though we don’t fall under Title 22, we normally follow Title 22 guidelines as well as environmental setup.

Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): It’s one of the requirements because these components are requirements of ASES [After-School Education & Safety].

Interestingly, given the “evidence-based practices” climate in contemporary educational settings, it is surprising that only two of the eleven directors (both from MUSD) made any reference to state- or national-level educational policies. Janelle was particularly elaborative as to the influence of external policies on the practices at her site. There were no references to educational policies among the CB Rec directors, so it is unclear how this organization type is affected by such policies.

Research. Three directors (all from MUSD) made references to either a conceptual or specific understanding of research-supported practices. Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD) had the most research-related references, and examples from her interview include:

Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): We use a … I guess, it is safe. SACERS is a School-Age Care Rating System. Are you familiar with the SACERS? The SACERS is something that we use as a guidance tool. It's a curriculum basically, to give you an outline of what your
afterschool programs should be like. That's what our program is modeled after or from back when we started. It talks about the centers that should be involved in the room. These [identified elements] are all the ones that are on there.

Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): Because personally, like a philosophy, I really think that … Health and safety with kids who are left to their own devices, there are so many things that can happen. If you look at that period of time after school, we talked about 3:00 to 6:00 or 3:00 to 7:00 or 3:00 to 8:00 in some cases, when parents come home, there are so many things that can happen. I firmly believe if children have an outlet, whether it’s art or music, or sports or something that they can invest their time in and we can nurture in them, it really keeps them from having the opportunity to make bad decisions, because they’re plugged in to something that’s important to them. It gives them a certain sense of value to that, and so I firmly believe in that.

Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): One of the things we’ve always said is play is so important. That’s one of the huge pushes of our program always has been, the play and the social skills. Not open-ended play, we have directed. Open-ended is huge. You need to have it. We don’t have enough of it. We like to scaffold those kind of environments, those experiences for kids, so that they are able to experience it on their own level. With that, I think the research and educational background, like I said, with the parent-involved activities, that was my own research. I did something for school, so it was something I was working. That’s how I knew about it.

The other two directors included references to “scaffolding” (e.g., Vygotsky) or a conceptual understanding of child development theory more generally. Unfortunately, however, none of the CB Rec directors indicated research influenced their practices, so this theme may be reflective of school-based programs—even if it was not a prominent theme within this setting, either.

**Funders.** Two directors indicated that funding sources influenced their ability to integrate particular elements within their programs. Those references include:

Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): When we had our certain funding, we would have a [Desired Results Developmental Profile], it’s an actual unit that we would use to see their growth, and how they would change, and evolve over the time of school year.

Lucas (Moriconi Learning Cetner, CB Rec): Another thing with the computers, since we moved over here we got new computers with a grant. I was the one that procured them and I got matched. Not only because I found a really good deal for them but I think it’s important to expose kids from a technology standpoint to different operating systems and different systems
While not a particularly prominent theme among the directors (one from MUSD and one from CB Rec), it is important to indicate the influence of external stakeholders on program elements. There is not enough data, however, to indicate whether or not either organization type is influenced differently by external funders.

Summary

Research Question 1 – What are the program elements site directors identify when describing the design of their programs?

From the site director interviews, two major categories of program goals were identified: youth-centered goals and program-centered goals. Within the youth-centered program goals, the following themes emerged from the data: personal/psychological, social, academic enrichment, enjoyment of activities, homework completion, whole-child, beyond the program, and physical. Within the program-centered goals, the following themes emerged from the data: environmental design, time filler, and individualized programming.

After the goal categories and themes were identified, the following activity categories were described: art, games, enrichment, group activities, homework time, academic support, student choice, behavior management, community involvement, and technology. Beyond these activity categories, student choice and behavior management were described by the directors when asked to describe the various activities associated with their program models.

Analyzing the descriptions of the associations between activities and goals within the site director-derived program models, the following associations were identified: correlational intentionality, uncertainty, and intentional development.
Research Question 2 – What types of information do site directors use to inform their work?

While the analysis of the types of information site directors draw upon was challenging, due to the interactions among various types, the following are emerged from the data: director-centered information, site-specific information, organizational information, and external information. The director-centered information category was comprised of the following themes: belief, personal preference, experience (as a professional), personal background, professional development, education, experience (as a former participant). Within the site-specific category, the identified themes were: youth participants, logistical pragmatics, tradition, fun, goals, participant families, school affiliations, and trial and error. Organizational information consisted of: knowledge sharing, organizational requirements, and supervisorial influence. Of the external information types indicated by the site directors, the following themes were discussed: Internet, local community, time of year, written materials, educational policies, contemporary culture and events, research, and funders.

Research Question 3 – In what ways do program elements vary across various youth-serving contexts?

Similarities. Of the youth-centered goals discussed within the program model building phase of the interviews, physical goals were the least common type (one director from each) in both the school-based and community-based programs. Directors from both organizations also discussed environmental design similarly. From the descriptions of the activities, art and games were the most prominent activities site directors discussed, in both organizations. Correlational intentionality and uncertainty were the two highest activity-to-goal associations indicated by directors in both organizations.
Within the information use portion of the site director data, belief was the highest theme across both organizations, with all eleven directors indicating personal beliefs influenced their program practices. Professional development and experience (as a participant) were also similarly discussed within both organization types, but neither one was a prominent source of information directors drew upon. Perhaps not surprisingly, the youth participants themselves were indicated by all eleven directors, so both organizations appeared to consider the youth while developing and implementing program elements. Similarly, logistical pragmatics and fun were also indicated as prominent themes in both organizations. There were no similarities at the organization-level, in terms of information use, however. Of the external influences, the use of the Internet was similar across the two organization types (5 of 7 from MUSD, 3 of 4 from CB Rec), as was the influence of external funders (even if only one director from each organization mentioned this theme).

**School-based organization prominence.** The directors in MUSD mentioned the following youth-centered goals more frequently than did the directors in CB Rec: academic enrichment, and whole-child. As for the program-centered goals, the MUSD directors discussed individualized programming more frequently than CB Rec directors—no references were made within their data. As for activities, the MUSD directors generally described a greater number of activities associated with their programs, as compared to the CB Rec director models. In particular, student choice, behavior management, and community involvement were not discussed by any of the CB Rec directors.

Perhaps the greatest difference between the two organizations was the prevalence of intentional development within the director descriptions—all seven MUSD directors included at least one reference to targeted program offerings, while none of the CB Rec directors did.
Considering the director-centered information category, personal preference, experience (as a professional), and education, were proportionally more prominent in the school-based director data, as compared to the community-based director data. Of the site-specific information themes, tradition was only slightly more prominent in the MUSD director descriptions, but it was relatively high within both organizations. Goals, participant families, and school affiliations were disproportionally more prominent in the MUSD sites as compared to the CB Rec sites. At the organizational level, knowledge sharing and organizational requirements were more characteristic of the school-base sites than the community-based programs. External influences were also disproportionally identified, as the following themes were more prominent in the school-based director data: local community, time of year, written materials, educational policies, contemporary culture and events, and research.

**Community-based organization prominence.** The directors within CB Rec mentioned the following youth-centered goals more frequently than their MUSD counterparts: enjoyment of activities, homework completion, and beyond the program. Of the program-centered goals, however, time filler was the only goal theme mentioned more frequently by CB Rec directors. None of the activities described by directors in either organization were discussed more frequently by CB Rec site directors. While uncertainty was indicated among many of the directors, when asked to describe why particular elements were incorporated within their models, it was slightly more prominent within the CB Rec director data.

**Personal background** was the only director-centered information theme identified more frequently in the CB Rec data, as compared to the MUSD data. Of the site-specific information themes, trial and error was the only theme emerging more frequently in the CB Rec director descriptions of their program models. Supervisorial influences were only slightly more
prominent in the CB Rec programs, as well. None of the external influences were identified more
frequently in the CB Rec data, when compared to the MUSD data.
Summary of the Study

A growing body of research suggests that organized activities represent important contexts for youth development (Mahoney, Larson, & Eccles, 2005). For example, researchers have reported links between youth involvement and individual, family, peer, and community factors that promote healthy development, including psychological well-being, social development, academic orientation, and reduced risk behavior involvement (for recent reviews see Durlak, Mahoney, Bohnert, & Parente, 2010; Mahoney, Parente, & Zigler, 2010; Mahoney, Vandell, Simpkins, & Zarrett, 2009). Yet, it is unclear how practitioners, within the various contexts researched, acquire or use this (or any other) research to inform their practices. The purpose of this study is to help narrow the gap between what is known about how organized activities influence youth and how the site directors learn to work within these settings. To accomplish this, the following questions are addressed:

1. What are the program elements practitioners identify when describing the design of their programs?
   - What are the program goals? What are the associated program activities?
   - How do practitioners describe the associations between goals and activities?

2. What types of information do site directors use to inform their work?
   - What are the sources of information?
   - What are the mediums by which it is received?
   - How prominent is research evidence within the information used?
3. In what ways do program elements vary across various youth-serving contexts?

- How do identified elements compare (or differ) between school-based and community-based ASPs?

The answers to these questions will help us begin to understand how site directors are able to clearly articulate program elements (e.g., Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003).

**Findings**

Building upon work related to clearly articulated program elements being indicative of quality programs (Granger, 2008; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003), the purpose of this study was to describe what youth practitioners (in a large ASP organization) discuss when describing their program models. There are four main findings from this preliminary work: (1) pro-social outcomes were the most frequent categories of goals described by site directors; (2) school-based programs and community-based programs vary slightly in their identification of various program elements; (3) associations between activities and outcomes were most frequently correlational; and (4) directors rely upon a wide variety of types of information within the practices, but personal beliefs and the youth participants themselves were the most frequently mentioned.

Of the goals identified, two major categories emerged from the data: youth-centered program goals (i.e., personal/psychological, social development, academic, fun/enjoyment, homework completion, whole-child, outside the program, and physical) and program-centered goals (i.e., environmental design, time filler, and individualized programming). A variety of activity categories also emerged from the program descriptions (i.e., art, games, enrichment, group activities, homework assistance, academic, student choice, behavior management strategies, community involvement, and technology). When describing the associations between
goals and activities, the primary relations described were correlational—lacking clearly identified mechanisms of association. Intentional development, however, was indicated within some of the associations described by MUSD staff, but there were no intentional development references within the CB Rec staff data.

Of the types of information practitioners discussed they used, four major categories emerged: (1) practitioner-centered information (i.e., belief, personal preference, experience—as a professional, personal background, professional development, education, and experience—as a participant); (2) site-specific information (i.e., youth participants, logistical pragmatics, tradition, fun, goals, participant families, school affiliation, and trial and error); (3) organizational learning (i.e., knowledge sharing, organizational requirements, supervisors); and (4) external information (i.e., Internet, local community, time of year, contemporary culture and events, written materials, educational policies, research—conceptual and explicit, funders).

Conclusions

**Research Question 1:** What are the program elements practitioners identify when describing the design of their programs?

Looking at patterns within the individual practitioner models (both goals and activities), it is clear that they have varying ideas regarding the overall design of their programs. While there was some overlap (especially related to pro-social elements within the models), there were also major differences. Both groups of practitioners (those at MUSD and those at CB Rec) spoke at length regarding the integration of personal and social development within their models, but they also differed in their discussion of additional elements. For example, CB Rec practitioners appeared to place a greater emphasis on homework completion (three of the four included it
within their model), while Eden was the only MUSD practitioner to mention homework completion as an intended goal.

As Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) state, the articulated elements of a given program will help researchers develop measures to capture the effectiveness of the program of interest. If a researcher were to speak to practitioners in both MUSD and CB Rec, he might develop completely different measures. If the researcher is only interested in individual programs, this may be fine. If, however, the researcher wants to compare programs within a larger organization, as is the case in this study, the elements of multiple stakeholder models need to be combined to capture a more complete picture of the overall program offerings.

Additionally, while practitioners in both organizations indicated the use of art and game-based activities, their rationales were quite different. MUSD practitioners spoke about the integration of art and game-based activities related to the promotion of personal and social development, while CB Rec practitioners spoke about filling time or merely providing activities for youth to choose from. With this in mind, it is important to note that all seven practitioners MUSD mentioned targeting activities at specific goals (or at least relating them to intended structures within the program design), while none of the CB Rec practitioners made any such references.

Another interesting finding from the current study was the extent to which two categories of goals emerged from the data. While it was expected that practitioners would discuss goals associated with outcomes they desired youth to experience through participation (i.e., youth-centered goals), it was not as clear that they would discuss goals associated with overall design of the program itself (i.e., program-centered goals). Again, reflecting upon previous thoughts regarding clearly articulated program goals being associated with quality programs (e.g.,
Granger, 2008; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003), there may need to be further clarification of the type of goals to be discussed. Clearly articulating procedural, or youth-centered goals, may be related to different aspects of program quality than say structural, or program-centered goals. This is an area for further evaluation in future studies.

**Research Question 2:** What types of information do practitioners rely upon when designing and implementing their programs?

Given the extensive literature surrounding the design and implementation of organized youth activities (e.g., Mahoney et al., 2005), one of the specific purposes behind this study was to assess the extent to which practitioners in organized youth activity settings utilized this or any other type of research within their practices. Unfortunately, but perhaps not surprisingly, research (as based in empirical study) was not evident in many of the practitioners discussions. In particular, only three of the eleven practitioners mentioned research-supported elements to their program, and the references were mainly at a conceptual understanding at best. The most prominent example was when Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD) stated:

Health and safety with kids who are left to their own devices, there are so many things that can happen. If you look at that period of time after school, we talked about 3:00 to 6:00 or 3:00 to 7:00 or 3:00 to 8:00 in some cases, when parents come home, there are so many things that can happen. I firmly believe if children have an outlet, whether it’s art or music, or sports or something that they can invest their time in and we can nurture in them, it really keeps them from having the opportunity to make bad decisions, because they’re plugged in to something that’s important to them. It gives them a certain sense of value to that, and so I firmly believe in that.

The 3:00 to 6:00 window in the after-school hours is supported by research that links it to increased deviancy by children and adolescents. In fact, it is one of the prominent pieces cited when discussing the need for organized activities in the after-school hours, but this may also be detrimental. Perhaps, Janelle is merely referencing a generally held belief regarding the importance of after-school programming in the development of youth and not referencing a conceptual
understanding of the research supporting this belief. Given her elaboration on her education and personal background, however, this reference is most likely related to conceptual use of research. Even still, the lack of prominent references to supporting research within the rest of the programs indicates there is much more room for improvement on the dissemination of relevant research.

Instead of relying upon theory-grounded evaluations, the focus for future evaluations may need to center on the interaction between research-supported practices and practitioner beliefs—a dominant source of information described by the practitioners in this study. As Davies states, A broader view of research-informed practices assumes an approach that “helps people make well-informed decisions about policies, programmes and projects by putting the best available evidence at the heart of policy development and implementation.”

According to the practitioners, evidence of student enjoyment and continued involvement were indicative of “successful” program functioning. Instead of demanding practitioners change due to the enforcement of educational policies (interestingly, cursory references to educational policies were made during the formal interview process, but many of the MUSD practitioners indicated—off the record—a disdain for the seemingly increased emphasis on pure academic support—moving away from the “learning through play” philosophy the organization was founded on—in recent years), there may be a way to couple existing practices with research-supported ones. To do so, however, will require linking the stated program model with observations as to whether or not the elements discussed are evident in practice. A future next step for this line of research will be to compare the practitioner-derived models with observations of practice at the respective sites. Whether or not practices align with program models will help provide evaluators with evidence to reference research to improve those connections.
Future Research

While this study begins to address the questions related to how youth practitioners are able to articulate program elements, there are still some limitations. For one, all of the items within the program model were assumed to have equivalent resources available to be implemented in practice. The number of links between elements was used to differentiate between individual items, but this may not capture actual organizational supports devoted toward each item. Differentiating between the allocation of resources between particular elements (activities and/or outcomes) would help distinguish any hierarchy of elements not pictured in the current study. Another limitation was the lack of differentiating between short-term and long-term outcomes. Using generalized “goals” within the model development portion of the interview was useful for brevity, but the identified outcomes may reflect varying levels of outcomes, which would influence any particular evaluation strategy of the overall program.

Furthermore, the use of two organizations poses limitations to the generalizability across youth activity sectors. Given that MUSD was the representative organization for school-based after-school programs, and CB Rec was the representative organization for community-based after-school programs, there is a risk of associating the findings with the respective organizational type. Findings from the MUSD practitioner interviews should be compared to program descriptions by other school-based organizations, which in turn should be compared to other community-based organizations to assess whether or not there is a clear differentiation between the two sectors. After comparing school-based after-school programs with community-based ones, it may also be useful to compare findings with similar descriptions of faith-based organizations, as well as youth sports organizations. Doing so will help elucidate a more generalized theory of the design and implementation of organized youth activities more
generally, as well as help define how information is used to inform practices across a wider variety of settings.

**Utility of the Collaborative Interview as a Model-Building Exercise**

Starting the dissertation project, I knew I needed an interview method flexible enough to provide freedom to participants to describe the various constructs in their own words but also systematic enough to allow for comparisons across sites. Thankfully, I was exposed to the Scanlan Collaborative Interview Method (Scanlan et al., 2003), which appeared to be valuable to achieving this objective, with slight modifications. Working with Prof. Scanlan, I was able to refine the method to offer me the opportunity to explore the development of after-school programming in a way previously unseen within the youth development literature.

For those considering adapting the techniques in this project, or within Scanlan’s PEAK study, I offer the following suggestions: (1) consider using multiple colors of index cards, and (2) involve participants in the analysis of existing theory. As I was particularly interested in goals and associated activities, I had the site directors discuss both within their models. While we labeled the goal and activity cards separately (“G” and “A” respectively) and kept them in separate portions of our collaborative interview board, using two colors of index colors would have eased this portion of the interview. One color could indicate “goals,” while the other could reference “activities.”

If I were to do this project over again, I would incorporate a “theory testing” portion to the model-building exercise. For example, the *Features* described in the Introduction could be presented to the participants, after they complete their personal models, where they would have the opportunity to discuss how each *feature* applies (or does not apply) to their individual
models. Involving them in the analysis of the application of the *Features* to their respective models, the directors could help extend this area of the youth development literature. For instance, *opportunities for belonging* may be more closely associated with individual activities, whereas *family and community involvement* could be related to individual goals of respective programs. This testing of the *Features* could help understand their application to after-school practices more generally.
REFERENCES


Table 1

*Activity offerings across YPQI program sites*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage of sites</th>
<th>Example program offerings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>Planning team for events, youth advisory board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>Vowels, spelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life skills</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>Discuss race and culture tension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>Scrapbooking, clay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical fitness</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>Walleyball, gym</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology/Computers</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Typing &amp; navigating skills, video production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>Ratios, counts re: food drive donations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>Basketball, baseball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative writing</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Journaling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Recipes and cookie dip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>Laws of motion, inertia experiments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>Hip Hop class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>History of Pop Music, Guitar lessons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theater</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Rehearsed 3 acts for musical play Annie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Form of poetry lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building/Shop</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Lego robotics, building a tower out of paper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: \(^1N = 87\) site managers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>MUSD</th>
<th>CB Rec</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal/Psychological</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): <em>I think it would be another [goal], especially in this homework area, trying to get the kids to be responsible for finishing their homework. A lot of them, they don’t want to do it necessarily, or they’ll wait until the last minute, or just trying to build that responsibility with them to get in instead of doing other fun items that we are doing.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): <em>Social skills are huge with us. How we treat each other, how we want to be treated. With that, it feeds into our empowerment because a lot of people don’t understand that they can stand up for themselves or that they can say things when they need to say things. With that, we allow them to have that ability as well as telling others how they feel and having others feel that too.</em> Eden (Roebrook, MUSD): <em>One of our main goals is that the children learn to work together and be able to solve problems with one another instead of fighting and things.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic enrichment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Scarlett (Kingsgrove): <em>I think a big thing that we’re trying to work on our program now is to implement a lot of the ASES components. It would be literacy, math, nutrition, science.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment of activities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Aria (Lilybluff, MUSD): <em>Fun is a big one. I really try to do lots of ... we make sure they’re safe and that they’re doing stuff that is towards a goal. It might not be everybody’s philosophy, but kids are here a long time. I want them to like coming and I want them to have fun with what they’re doing. As a bonus, then they get to learn about socialization, or learn something educational, or learn how to accomplish something.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework completion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Raelynn (Fairmont Community Center, CB Rec): <em>I would say one of our goals is to make sure that the kids get help with their homework.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-child</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Lucy (Cedarton, MUSD): <em>I think that I try to produce, I guess, a well-rounded child. That’s everything from introducing them to new ideas culturally, music-wise, just in general anything that’s different from what they get feed at home, to give them a wider range of things so that, because a lot of times, some of these kids don’t get to see more than what happens at their home because they’re single … the only child to a single parent and stuff like.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond the program</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Raelynn (Fairmont Community Center, CB Rec): <em>I try to help them to see past that gang influence and try to get them to start doing other things, thinking about their future and what they want to do.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kayden (Elden Park, CB Rec): *Keeping kids active. Some of the things our supervisor was telling us, like get the kids outside playing.*

Notes: 1 Seven site directors were interviewed from Morville Unified School District (MUSD) programs, and four site directors were interviewed from the City of Boomtown Department of Parks and Recreation (CB Rec) programs.
## Table 3  
**Program-Centered Goal Themes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>MUSD</th>
<th>N(^1)</th>
<th>CB Rec</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Environmental design       | 5    | 3       |        | Aria (Lilybluff, MUSD): *We like to provide a safe program the best we can, so that the kids are safe and happy. That's my main goal, actually. I might put that above everything else.*  
Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec): *Kids safety. I think we kind of strive to … We're a community center, so we're kind of striving for a safe haven. Keeping kids off the street from maybe joining gangs. It seems like all of our community centers are almost strategically placed in areas of gang activity. We're kind of like a safe haven for kids. I said that already.* |
| Time filler                | 1    | 3       |        | Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): *I'm having the librarian come in the week after Thanksgiving. That will take up that time.*  
Raelynn (Fairmont Community Center, CB Rec): *When I got here, one of the things we always did was indoor games. Especially during the school year if it rains and there's nothing else do* |
| Individualized programming | 3    | 0       |        | Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): *I think in relation to how I plan all these things. I always have to be cognizant of the fact that I have autistic children. I have children with ADHD, or a speech impediment, or some sort of special need. I am involved in IEP’s, and IHP’s. In my planning, I need to think maybe this child would not be receptive to doing that because of…how can I manipulate and change that and make it so that they can be involved as well? Especially, when things are noisy, I have one autistic child and she, when things are really loud, obviously, that's not setting well with her. I need to find a different activity for her to do or something calming because she may not be happy with it. That's definitely something I have to take into consideration on a daily basis as well.* |

Notes:  
\(^1\) Seven site directors were interviewed from Morville Unified School District (MUSD) programs, and four site directors were interviewed from the City of Boomtown Department of Parks and Recreation (CB Rec) programs.
Table 4  
Activity Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>$N^I$</th>
<th>MUSD</th>
<th>CB Rec</th>
<th>Example program offerings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Painting, water colors, mosaics, fuse beads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kickball, soccer, tag, board games, logic puzzles, ping pong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrichment</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural awareness, character development, performance arts, sewing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group activities</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing time, themed parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework time</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tutoring, homework assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic support</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Science, reading, writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student choice</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>Time allocated for students to choose their own activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior management</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rewards for preferred behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community involvement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>Guest speakers, community service projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Computers, typing, video games</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: $^I$ Seven site directors were interviewed from Morville Unified School District (MUSD) programs, and four site directors were interviewed from the City of Boomtown Department of Parks and Recreation (CB Rec) programs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>MUSD</th>
<th>CB Rec</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Correlational intentionality | 7    | 4      | Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): *Even free play, when they're playing games, there's so many things that they can learn just by using a monopoly game. I know we don't always think of those things, but connect four, they're counting.*  
Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec): *I think sports do help with education in that it makes kids disciplined. Both sports and music. I played sports in high school. Even though it does take up a bunch of time, also gets you accustomed to doing something for three or four hours, and scheduling out your time. You can't do sports in high school if you don't have a certain GPA, so I definitely think they relate to one another.* |
| Uncertainty                | 5    | 4      | Juliette (Foxwell, MUSD): *Lottery tickets, I don't know. Somebody else was doing it and I thought it was a neat idea to do. We used to do ... what did we do? We used to do points and then, say, you got so many points, they got to go to the price box but we changed it to this. I don't remember why we did, but it seemed to ... I don't know. It was just easier to do, and it teaches them that they have to earn it, and I don't know.*  
Interviewer: *In that regard again, reading, which of these program goals is reading related to?*  
Aria (Lilybluff, MUSD): *Probably socialization and educational support. Some kids might think it's fun, but I don't know.* |
| Intentional development    | 7    | 0      | Aria (Lilybluff): *Educational support, it does too. This month, we’re learning about animals, so we learn a little bit of animals, then do some activities like games, a contest or something, where they had to be the animal or they have to know the characteristics of something, so it goes with that, too.*  
Eden (Roebrook): *This year ... for the last couple of years, we have been doing an activity centralized on a theme, and last year, it was “Route 66,” so we followed the route along Route 66 and we visited a state each month and we learned about, not only what’s important ... why Route 66 was important to that area, but also their State flag, their bird, and other states’ symbols.*  
*This year we are doing “The Magic School Bus,” which is a series of books and it has not only to do with arts and crafts, but also, it has a lot, basically, to do with science. We are trying to incorporate the books. We read the story ... we read various stories over the month, and then we've been doing more science experiments with the kids.* |

Notes: *Seven site directors were interviewed from Morville Unified School District (MUSD) programs, and four site directors were interviewed from the City of Boomtown Department of Parks and Recreation (CB Rec) programs.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>MUSD</th>
<th>CB Rec</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Belief                        | 7    | 4      | Aria (Lilybluff, MUSD): *It might not be everybody's philosophy, but kids are here a long time. I want them to like coming and I want them to have fun with what they're doing. As a bonus, then they get to learn about socialization, or learn something educational, or learn how to accomplish something.*  
Eden (Roebrook, MUSD): *I felt that children need to learn that they can be independent, that they don’t have to have somebody always entertaining them, that they can get cards out and play their own game of cards, or sit and draw a picture or read a book, and not always have to have somebody next to them.* |
| Personal Preference           | 6    | 2      | Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): *Normally, science is an individual site thing and it goes ... My science theme, that was an individual one. I worked with my assistant lead teacher, and then I’ve asked my other sites to highlight different activities. But my actual, my science theme, in addition to my curriculum, is a personal choice at my site.*  
Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec): *Also just what our strengths are. I think I’ve definitely tried to get the kids to do more arts and crafts related stuff. Which I think annoys some kids because they’re not into that stuff, whereas I think conversely back to when [previous supervisor] was running the show.* |
| Experience (professional)     | 6    | 2      | Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): *When I wanted that to be implemented, it was important because I had a lot of children that were going to that, that had lived in their cars, or living at House of Hope, or having drug dependent parents, or in general not a very good home life. I was encountered with social workers a lot. I've dealt a lot with that, having to be a witness for that.*  
Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): *I just went to an art and science training. Discount School Supply was the one donating the items so we had a coffee filter, and we were using these water color paints, and we actually did the project. We put salt on them to incorporate the science part of how it made the marks and how salt soaks up the liquid. You could see the transformation. We were doing it and we could come back and do it with them. I think those are sometimes good because depending on who you are, and what you're coming from, and your background sometimes you* |
| Personal background           | 4    | 3      | Tessa (Springborough, MUSD): *And then as my daughter went through school and seeing her choices that she made, she actually taught me to do a lot of volunteerism and I ... then with her working with the kids here, and seeing their enjoyment, so I think it was something from my life that just came here.* |
| Professional development      | 3    | 2      | Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): *I just went to an art and science training. Discount School Supply was the one donating the items so we had a coffee filter, and we were using these water color paints, and we actually did the project. We put salt on them to incorporate the science part of how it made the marks and how salt soaks up the liquid. You could see the transformation. We were doing it and we could come back and do it with them. I think those are sometimes good because depending on who you are, and what you're coming from, and your background sometimes you* |
don't always see the whole picture unless you’re doing it. That way you can see how it plays out.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): I’m still in college so I’m still learning a lot from that. My major is Human Development, with an emphasis in the counseling. I was going to do education, but I changed that. I’ve learned everything from infancy to adults and how they relate. I try to incorporate a lot of what I’ve learned from school, but I enjoyed the trainings because they’re more hands-on, and they teach you how that you’re doing it hands-on so that when you go do it with them the same way. I enjoyed that a lot.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience (participant)</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kayden (Elden Park, CB Rec): I think that’s more personal. I know when ... I used to come to camp. There used to be day camps. That was during summer. I used to come and I thought they were the coolest people. I looked up to them and I ended up becoming one of them, so I just feel like we need to set examples for the kids, definitely.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *Seven site directors were interviewed from Morville Unified School District (MUSD) programs, and four site directors were interviewed from the City of Boomtown Department of Parks and Recreation (CB Rec) programs.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>MUSD</th>
<th>CB Rec</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth Participants</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lucy (Cedarton, MUSD): The themes, like I said, I try to look at media. I try to look at what the kids are talking about as well. One month we just did Super Mario because that’s what the kids are interested in. You know what I mean? I did art projects, and we talked about all of the themes and games are about. We talked a little bit about the history of Nintendo because I love Nintendo. It was cool because I can relate to it. They were, they totally knew what I was talking about. Like I said, it just really has to do with what they’re looking at, at the time, too, because I can come up with a bunch of ideas, but if they’re not into it, it’s lame. Eden (Roebrook, MUSD): I also learn by … seeing if the kids enjoy the activity, then I know we could do it again, and if they don’t enjoy the activity we won’t do it again, so it’s like having the children’s input as well as my staff members’. Some of the group games, when we try to do new group games, if the kids don’t really like it or they don’t understand it, then we’ll know next time not to do it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistical pragmatics</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Juliette (Foxwell, MUSD): By learning through doing it. You find out what works and what doesn’t work for your particular site, because a better site might not be able to do certain things that we can do because we have a smaller group, so it just depends on what’s going on at the time, and how you set things up. Other sites have four people, so they can split things up a little more, whereas we only have two people. One of us has to be in here doing homework, and the other one has to be outside doing ... she's outside there by herself. She has to oversee that whole playground, whereas if you had two or three people out there, one could be doing a game over here, one could be doing this, and one is roaming around. We're the only ones, so we're standing there watching everything that's going on. It's just different for each site. Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec): [Describing the use of indoor activities due to lack of outdoor space] It’s one of those things that you kind of have to do, because again sports aren’t that accessible. Indoor activities is giving those kids with a lot of pent up energy to expel it in musical chairs or four corners where they can be somewhat safe in an indoor environment but still have fun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradition</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): One of the things we’ve always said is play is so important. That’s one of the huge pushes of our program always has been, the play and the social skills. Not open-ended play, we have directed. Open-ended is huge. You need to have it. We don’t have enough of it. We like to scaffold those kind of environments, those experiences for kids, so that they are able to experience it on their own level.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Fun | 6 | 3 | Juliette (Foxwell, MUSD): *Because it's fun, and they expect those things because this Valentine’s Day, you expect to be able to bring your friends Valentine's and things like that, so they expect it, so you do it, and it's fun.*  
Interviewer: *Any other things or when we think about fun, how might that …*  
Juliette: *Come on, everything's fun.*  
Interviewer: *I can't answer for …*  
Juliette: *They don't like group time very much. Games are fun. Art is fun. They love fun. We try to make everything fun for them because, usually, if it's not fun, they're not going to do it. Homework time is not very much fun so that's why they fight back not to do homework [laughs] but, yes, so … That's it.* |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Goals | 7 | 2 | Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): *Some of them play really hard and as they get older, they're getting into that phase of smelliness is what I call it. That's definitely something that we talk about to and incorporate that with science, definitely. These are the basis of what we do every day. Obviously, we elaborate on certain things if we're focusing on that and it depends on them.*  
Aria (Lilybluff, MUSD): *It's a big one. I really try to do lots of ... we make sure they're safe and that they're doing stuff that is towards a goal.* |
| Participant families | 7 | 1 | Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): *Social-emotional? Other than a child really needs to build their social skills and there isn’t a lot of ... Let’s face it, kids are here most of the day and there’s a lot of social skills that they aren’t learning from their family life anymore. We are a surrogate-type of family in a lot of instances. Not only, I mean we have great parents, don’t get me wrong, but there are a lot of dynamics and things that they don’t learn because they don’t have neighbors like what they used to have.*  
Kennedy (Welworth Community Center, CB Rec): *We do homework because I know that when they’re here, all they want to do is play, but their parents are not okay with that. The parents would complain, like they don’t do it at home. When they get here we make sure they do it. That way they can continue to come to the program.* |
| School affiliation | 5 | 1 | Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): *We do have literacy. We do read and we try to mirror what’s going on at school by letting them do reading counts and things like that so there are those aspects as well. Library, I’m having a librarian be a guest speaker this month so that kind of thing to emphasize those things.* |
| Trial and error | 2 | 3 | Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec): *That’s tough, because sometimes I like spaghetti method you know, just fling everything at the wall and see what sticks.* |

Notes: ¹ Seven site directors were interviewed from Morville Unified School District (MUSD) programs, and four site directors were interviewed from the City of Boomtown Department of Parks and Recreation (CB Rec) programs.
Table 8  
Organizational Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>MUSD</th>
<th>CB Rec</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge sharing</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): Actually we make them as lead teachers but we do come together and we try ... Because we're really trying to collaborate to make a stronger, well-rounded program overall because we're a large program with 27 sites and with that, there's a lot of fluctuation. We're a great standard but as far as the enrichment, the really great stuff that could be added to a program, it's really awesome if you're able to take from other people that you work with and help with them to really enrich your program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational requirements</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Juliette (Foxwell, MUSD): No. We all pretty much do ... you're going to find that all of our sites pretty much do the same kind of format. We usually have a homework time. We have arts and crafts time. We have an organized group game time. It might be different how it's set up, but we all do those things. Most of us have a group time. We always have a snack time. All those things are ... it's kind of the way our programs are set up to do. It's the way we're instructed to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisory influence</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): Our supervisor incorporates a lot of ... he keeps up on a lot of the stuff that's going around. There's a huge pressure with this educational extension of the day, which I believe, and I believe in extending and giving the kids the opportunity to get the work done that they are not getting done in school, and I think that's where they're ... they have great intentions but a lot of these funded programs are really kind of losing the essence of what after-school should be because of the play component.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: ¹ Seven site directors were interviewed from Morville Unified School District (MUSD) programs, and four site directors were interviewed from the City of Boomtown Department of Parks and Recreation (CB Rec) programs.
Table 9
External Influences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>N&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>MUSD 5 CB Rec 3</td>
<td>Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec): <em>Also I think just randomly I’ll find stuff on the internet, I’ll just stumble across it or think of a good idea, like the marshmallow experiment.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Community</td>
<td>MUSD 6 CB Rec 1</td>
<td>Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): <em>We wanted to pull out another thread, something that they can learn from, something that’s in their environment. We’re hoping to get some more animals as well. I had a snake at my other site but it stayed there because it was donated by one of the students. We have a mom that works at an outdoor science center activity thing in Long Beach. She’s come in. She was a guest speaker. When we talked about birds, she came in and talked about bird stuff, about local bird stuff about California birds that are native to California. Then we talked about habitats and the food. She actually brought owl pellets and they got to dissect those. That’s an individual site thing. That was reaching out to guest speakers.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time of year</td>
<td>MUSD 5 CB Rec 1</td>
<td>Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): <em>Let’s say for November, for example, we have the Magic School Bus theme and then we have November. Within the November month segment, because they are broken down by month, we have fall, the seasons, with the emphasis on fall. Then we have Thanksgiving and harvest, which is what we’re working on. Today we’re doing corn, the history of corn, and then we’ll do a little bit of Native American stuff with names and things like that tomorrow and Friday.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written materials</td>
<td>MUSD 4 CB Rec 0</td>
<td>Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): <em>The Magic School Bus, every book is different. We have the solar system, we’ve covered the ocean, and they do audio, and also we do a science project that goes along with it. The whole entire curriculum is tied into every way that each child learns and I think that would go for all of these.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational policies</td>
<td>MUSD 3 CB Rec 0</td>
<td>Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): <em>The safety, there’s a program protocol in my place to maintain a healthy and safety environment. I guess health comes under the safety because we don’t want anything that’s going to endanger the students’ health. It’s a district standard. Even though we don’t fall under Title 22, we normally follow Title 22 guidelines as well as environmental setup.</em> Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): <em>It’s one of the requirements because these components are requirements of ASES [After-School Education &amp; Safety].</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Contemporary culture and events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lucy (Cedarton, MUSD): The themes, like I said, I try to look at media. I try to look at what the kids are talking about as well. One month we just did Super Mario because that’s what the kids are interested in.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ava (Lilybluff, MUSD): We did a voting thing, it’s super funny, on Election Day. They’ve learned all about voting and how you have to do this and all that kind of stuff.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD): We use a … I guess, it is safe. SACERS is a School-Age Care Rating System. Are you familiar with the SACERS? The SACERS is something that we use as a guidance tool. It’s a curriculum basically, to give you an outline of what your afterschool programs should be like. That’s what our program is modeled after or from back when we started. It talks about the centers that should be involved in the room. These [identified elements] are all the ones that are on there.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Funders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD): When we had our certain funding, we would have a [Desired Results Developmental Profile], it’s an actual unit that we would use to see their growth, and how they would change, and evolve over the time of school year.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Notes:** 1 Seven site directors were interviewed from Morville Unified School District (MUSD) programs, and four site directors were interviewed from the City of Boomtown Department of Parks and Recreation (CB Rec) programs.
APPENDIX A

Features of Contexts that Promote Positive Development

**Physical and Psychological Safety:** The context provides secure and health-promoting facilities and practices, allows for safe and appropriate peer interactions, and discourages unsafe health practices and negative or confrontational social interchanges.

**Appropriate Structure:** The context provides clear, appropriate, and consistent rules and expectations, adult supervision, guidance, and age-appropriate monitoring in a predictable social atmosphere where clear boundaries are known and expected.

**Supportive Relationships:** The context offers stable opportunities to form relationships with peers and adults wherein social interchanges are characterized by warmth, closeness, and mutual respect, and where guidance and support from adults is available, appropriate, and predictable.

**Opportunities to Belong:** The context emphasizes the inclusion of all members and maintains a social environment that recognizes, appreciates, and encourages individual differences in cultural values, gender, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

**Positive Social Norms:** The context maintains expectations and requirements for socially appropriate behavior and encourages desirable and accepted values and morals.

**Support for Efficacy and Mattering:** The context allows for and supports autonomy, values individual expression and opinions, concentrates on growth and improvement rather than absolute performance, encourages and enables individuals to take on challenging responsibilities and to carry out actions aimed at making a difference.

**Opportunities for Skill Building:** The context offers opportunities to learn and build physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional, and social skills that facilitate well-being in the present and prepare individuals for health and competent functioning in the future.

**Family, School, and Community Efforts:** The context provides opportunities for synergistic experiences that integrate transactions across family, school, and community.

*Note.* Taken from the findings of the Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).
APPENDIX B

BACKGROUND SURVEY

A. Your Job
1. How long have you been working at this program? (Circle ONE)
   a. Less than one year
   b. 1 – 2 years
   c. 3 – 5 years
   d. 6 – 10 years
   e. More than 10 years

2. How would you describe your current role(s) in this program?

3. Do you have a formal job description? If so, would it be possible to get a copy?

4. Are you responsible for planning activities at the program?
   a. No (skip to question 9)
   b. Yes

5. How often do you plan activities? (Circle ONE)
   a. Never
   b. Once a year
   c. Twice a year
   d. Monthly
   e. Weekly
   f. Daily

6. Are your activity plans reviewed by someone else?
   a. No
   b. Yes

7. Do you review others’ activity plans?
   a. No
   b. Yes

8. Is planning time provided?
   a. No (skip to question 9)
   b. Yes

9. Are you compensated for planning time?
   a. No
   b. Yes
      i. Specify number of hours per week: ________________

Adaptation of Program Staff Survey from the Study of Promising After-School Programs (Vandell et al., 2004).

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B. Job Satisfaction and Support
Below are some questions about your experience working in the program.

10. How often do you meet with other staff at this after-school program to discuss program-related issues (without students) for at least 30 minutes? (Circle ONE)
   a. Never (skip to question 12)
   b. Once a year
   c. Every 2-3 months or once a semester
   d. Monthly
   e. Weekly
   f. Daily
   g. Other (specify): _______________________________

11. What are the most common discussion topics/agenda items at these meetings? (Circle ALL that apply)
   a. Program logistics
   b. Planning program activities
   c. Individual students and/or their needs
   d. Providing training/professional development
   e. Other (specify): _______________________________

12. Are you compensated for this meeting time? (Circle ONE)
   a. No
   b. Yes, all meetings
   c. Yes, some but not all meetings

13. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your experiences working at the after-school program? Circle ONE number for each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. I enjoy working here</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. I have the materials I need to do a good job</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. I have the space I need to do a good job</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. I find the work here challenging and rewarding</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. I get the support and feedback I need from my supervisor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. I have enough opportunities to talk and share ideas with other staff</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. I generally work on my own</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Staff members are committed to their work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Staff members support each other and work as a team</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. Staff are involved in important decisions about program operations and design</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C. Training and Technical Assistance
Below are questions about the training and technical assistance available to program staff.

14. Did you attend any training during this academic year?
   a. No (skip to question 16)
   b. Yes

15. How many total hours of training did you receive this academic year? ____________

16. Are you paid for training as part of your job at the after-school program?
   a. No
   b. Yes

D. Relationships with Parents and Community Organizations
Below are some questions about the relationship and communication between your program and the partner school(s) and community. Circle ONE number for each statement.

17. During this past year, how often did you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>1 to 2 times a semester</th>
<th>Once a month</th>
<th>At least 2 to 3 times a month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Meet with parents individually (not as a group)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Meet with parents as a group</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Talk with parents over the phone</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Send information about the program home to parents</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Hold events or meetings for parents</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. Your Background and Experience
Below are some questions about your professional background and experience.

18. Prior to taking your job with this program, did you have prior experience working in youth-serving organizations?
   a. No (skip to question 19)
   b. Yes

19. What organization(s)? What was your role(s)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
20. Prior to taking your position with this program, did you have experience working in a school setting?
   a. No (skip to question 24)
   b. Yes

21. If you had prior experience working in a school setting, what was your role?
   (Circle ALL THAT APPLY)
   a. School Administrator
   b. Classroom Teacher
   c. Instructional Specialist (e.g., music, art, physical education, reading)
   d. Classroom Aide/Teaching Assistant
   e. Pupil Support Staff (e.g., school counselor, social worker, psychologist)
   f. ESL Instructor
   g. Some other position in a school setting
      i. Specify:________________________

22. What is your highest level of education? (Circle ONE)
   a. Less than high school
   b. High school or GED
   c. Some college, other classes/training not related to a degree
   d. Completed two-year college degree
   e. Completed four-year college degree
   f. Some graduate work
   g. Master’s degree or higher

23. What was your area of study?

24. While you were growing up, did you have any experience participating in any organized activities?
   a. No (skip to question 24)
   b. Yes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What activities?</th>
<th>How long did you participate?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
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APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Section I:  Beginning the Interview
- Introductory comments and informed consent
- Background questions to initiate descriptive conversation
  - Age, education, previous experience in youth context, job description, etc.

Section II:  Description of current position within organization
- Creating a contextualized focus of particular youth setting
- Strengthening the collaborative partnership
- Defining role related to working with youth

Section III:  Participant-derived program model
- Orienting instructions
- Open-ended questions and probes of expected youth outcomes from participation in program
  - Short-term and long-term
- Open-ended questions and probes of program features related to identified outcomes
  3. Activities and participation
- Final elaboration probes for practitioner-derived logic model
  - Detail the relationships between program features and outcomes

Section IV:  Features of positive developmental settings (Eccles & Gootman, 2002)
- Orienting instructions
- Lead-up questions
- Direct test of relation between Features and practitioner-derived model

Section V:  Types on information informing components within the model
- Open-ended questions and probes of sources of knowledge behind model components
- Targeted questions and probes to address the use of research to inform model components

Section VI:  Interview conclusion

Section VII:  Evaluation and summary of interview

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3 Adapted from Scanlan Collaborative Interview Method (Scanlan et al., 2003)
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Section 0:  Before the Interview date

A brief background survey (Appendix D) will be sent with the study information sheet and consent form. The survey will include questions related to: education, previous experience in youth contexts, and will ask for a copy of the participant’s job description.

Section 1:  Beginning the Interview

“Today, we’re going to have a conversation about the program you have here at [organization]. As a graduate student, I’m particularly interested in organized activities, I’m particularly interested in how different programs are developed, so I’m excited to hear about your experiences with your program.

“As we talk, we’ll talk about the goals of your program, as well as specific features of your program that help you reach those goals. As we discuss your program, you and I will work together to come up with a model that will act as a visual representation for us to discuss.

“Before we get started, I do want to make sure that you have had a chance to read through the study information sheet and the consent form. While I believe the activities that we will use during this interview will help us both better understand your program, I want you to know that your participation is voluntary—you’re free to choose to not answer any question that you don’t want to answer or leave the study at any time.”

Section II:  Description of current position within organization

“I see that you list [reference survey response] as your current role in the program. What are the primary responsibilities of your position?”

Section III:  Participant-derived program model

“Alright. Now, we’re going to build a model of your program. We’ll build it together, so please feel free to ask any questions along the way.”

Outcomes

“I’d like you think about the program here at [ORGANIZATION].”

1. What would you say is an outcome of participating in the program here?
   a. Or, what can a student expect to gain from the program?

   *** Add individual items to the board as they are identified ***

2. Would you say [identified element] is a short-term or a long-term outcome?
Activities

“Now, I’d like you to think about the activities of the program that contribute to the outcomes we just wrote down.”

3. What is one of the activities?
   a. Or, what is a part of the program that lead to any of the outcomes?

4. Which outcome(s) is [identified activity] related to?
   a. How so?

*** Color code activities and outcomes to indicate relations ***

5. Are there any additional outcomes or activities you would like to add to your model?

Section IV: Types of information informing components within the model

“Now that we have you’re model, I’d like you to consider where, or how, you learned to include each item.”

*** Take each item individually ***

6. Considering [specific outcome], where did you learn that it was an outcome you wanted to target within your program?
   a. Or, what made you decide to include it within your model?

*** Write type of information informing item on the back of the card ***

7. Considering [specific activity], where did you learn that it was an activity you wanted to use within your program?
   a. Or, what made you decide to include it within your model?

*** Write type of information informing item on the back of the card ***

Information Acquisition

8. What is your preferred method for learning what works and what doesn’t?
   a. How do you like to learn about what goes into your program?

9. How would you define research?
   a. How is research used in your program?

10. If you wanted to know the research used to develop the features of your program, who in your organization would you talk to?

Section V: Interview conclusion

“Thank you very much for your participation in this activity, today. Before we conclude, do you feel there is anything that needs to be added to your model? Is there anything about your program that is not captured on our board here?”
“I really appreciate your input regarding the program(s) here at [organization]. If you have any questions, or if you think of anything else later on, here’s my card. Please feel free to contact me anytime.”

Section VI: Evaluation and summary of interview
APPENDIX E

Site Director-Derived Program Models

Figure 1
Participant-Derived Model of Program Elements: Janelle (Birchridge, MUSD)
Figure 2
Participant-Derived Model of Program Elements: Scarlett (Kingsgrove, MUSD)
Figure 3
Participant-Derived Model of Program Elements: Juliette (Foxwell, MUSD)
Figure 4
Participant-Derived Model of Program Elements: Tessa (Springborough, MUSD)
Figure 5
Participant Derived Model of Program Elements: Ava (Lilybluff, MUSD)
Figure 6
Participant Derived Model of Program Elements: Lucy (Cedarton, MUSD)
Figure 7
Participant-Derived Model of Program Elements: Eden (Roebrook, MUSD)
Figure 8
Participant-Derived Model of Program Elements: Lucas (Moriconi Learning Center, CB Rec)
Figure 9
Participant-Derived Model of Program Elements: Kayden (Elden Park, CB Rec)
Figure 10
Participant-Derived Model of Program Elements: Raelynn (Fairmont Community Center, CB Rec)
Figure 11
Participant-Derived Model of Program Elements: Kennedy (Welworth Community Center, CB Rec)