



KANSAS ENRICHMENT NETWORK
Making Connections for Out-of-School Time

Youth Access to Transportation for Out-of-School Programs

Revised AUGUST 2018

IMPROVING ACCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS

ASSESSING THE PROBLEM

In the fall of 2016, the Kansas Enrichment Network began working with representatives from the KC Library, KC STEM Alliance, Johnson County Libraries, Greenworks, Missouri AfterSchool Network, and Minddrive, to look at issues surrounding access to transportation for children K-12. There was growing concern and awareness that young people of all ages and walks of life lacked access to convenient, consistent and accessible transportation to out-of-school programs

Benefits of Out of School (OST) Programs

The benefits of OST are well documented, including:

- Improved academic performance
- Increased attendance
- Decreased truancy
- Higher levels of engagement
- Better classroom behavior
- Improved 21st century skills

- Reduced risky behaviors
- Improved safety
- Decreased juvenile crime
- Greater exposure and experience with science, technology and math (STEM) activities
- Improved health
- Increased in physical activity.

Survey of providers

A survey of out-of-school providers and advocates was conducted in March 2017 and included museums, libraries, school-based programs, the zoo, independent programs and homeless liaisons from the Kansas City region. The majority of respondents were from Jackson County, MO, and Wyandotte & Johnson County, KS, with limited responses from Cass, Clay, Leavenworth and Platte Counties. No responses were received from Miami or Ray Counties.

All grade levels were represented K-12, and included before and after school, summer, weekend and evening programs.

Results Show Barriers

For those responding, **90% believe transportation is a barrier to accessing out of school programs**, with less than one third of programs providing transportation for students to or from their program.

Respondents indicated that improving access to transportation would allow them to serve more students more effectively and efficiently, providing tremendous benefit to a broader diversity of students. They perceived a variety of barriers preventing students from accessing transportation, including geographic proximity, psychosocial and socio-economic barriers, with low income populations being the most directly impacted.

Youth voice:

"I was supposed to go to ACT prep, but did not have a ride."

Transportation Think Tank

A larger group of providers assembled on August 16, 2017 to discuss the findings of the survey and further identify the issues and barriers surrounding youth access to transportation. More than twenty attendees represented out of school providers, school districts, libraries, and advocacy organizations.

Participants identified that the lack of access goes across socio-economic barriers and includes youth of varying backgrounds:

- Urban, suburban, rural
- Low Income
- English as Second Language
- Predominantly teens
- Single parent homes



Who Is Affected?

- Two working parents
- Teens with care responsibilities for siblings
- Those who don't feel safe or welcome
- Those who have a lack understanding of how to use public transit
- Those who feel a stigma for using public transportation

Youth voice:
"I have a car but don't use it often because gas is expensive."



Key Question: *How do we validate the scope of the problem by testing these perceived barriers with parents?*

Issues & Barriers

Participants identified several barriers specific to **transportation** including:

- Bus schedules, routes that do not match needs
- Lengthy or indirect bus routes
- Challenge of State Line
- Not close to bus stop

Issues were also identified related to **parental** concerns, life style or socio-economic factors, including:

- Parents don't drive because of problems with vehicle, licensure or insurance
- Parents lack understanding of afterschool value
- Fear of unknown
- Safety concerns
- Lack money for bus or taxi



AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS BENEFIT ALL STUDENTS

Better Classroom Behavior

Extra time in school spent in a more relaxed environment can promote better behavior.



Improved Academic Performance

40% of students attending an afterschool program earned better grades in reading and math.

FAST FACTS

90%

Believe transportation is a barrier to accessing after school programs.



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Validating the Problem

Additional steps to better understanding the scope of the problem determined at the August 2017 meeting were to reach out to students and families to validate the perceived issues and identify specific barriers or concerns unique to their location and circumstance.

Reaching Students

- Target specific districts (urban/suburban; KS/MO)
- Survey middle/high school students
- Partner with researcher to develop survey (CPPRS, MARC, KCAERC)
- Provide multi-lingual survey options
- Conduct Focus Groups at Library/Provider Sites

Reaching Parents

- Target specific districts (urban/suburban; KS/MO)
- Multi-lingual options
- Back to School Survey
- Parent Teacher conferences
- Focus Groups at churches, neighborhood groups, public housing, provider organizations

Looking for Solutions

Some providers are already looking for creative ways to implement program or transportation strategies to address the transportation issue, but resources are limited. Liability concerns with providing transportation are surfacing in these creative situations.

Provider-based Strategies

- Deliver programs in multiple sites and provide multiple time options
- Own or rent van/bus and provide transport to/from
- Coordinate with nonprofit partner (i.e., church) to provide transportation or provide programs on site

School-based Strategies

- Deliver more programs on-site at school
- Provide late buses

Transportation Strategies

- Provide Youth Bus Pass/Library Card
- Provide vouchers for taxi

Moving Forward

Continuing surveys and focus groups should address both awareness of programs as well as access issues. To better understand unique population needs, it should include basic demographic information as well as geographic and socio-economic information. Attention should also be given to collecting anecdotal and qualitative information that tell the personal stories of students and their problems with accessing transportation.

Youth Voice

N=94, Ages 12-18,
spanning economic and
cultural diversity

Transportation is used for school-sponsored programs/events, visiting the library, sports activities, youth court, church activities, volunteering, and entertainment (theater, orchestra, concert, visiting restaurants).

Youth are very familiar with libraries, large museums, and the zoo.

Youth are much less familiar with individual programs offering specialized services such as arts, instruction in technology. They lack knowledge about localized programs serving specific school districts or regions.

Approximately 26% of participants indicated they were unable to attend an event within a month's span of time since transportation was unavailable.

Youth suggestions for transportation strategies -- 35% cited carpools; 24% biking or by bus; and 6% suggested walking, Uber, or bike share.

Kansas youth indicate vehicles as their major mode of transportation. Sixty-four cited reliance on parents; 27% indicate they do walk to some events.

Missouri youth indicate their most frequently used modes are public transportation or walking.

To participate in her afterschool program, a KC Metro girl utilizes public transportation. After the program, the bus drops her one-half mile from home -- at dusk. Safety is a concern.

Afterschool programs keep kids safe, boost student success, and help parents keep their jobs. Kids achieve more, productivity goes up, and risky behaviors go down. Yet for every youngster in a program – Kansas or Missouri – two are waiting to get in.
--Afterschool Alliance

One provider utilizes a personal staff vehicle for transportation. To accommodate youth for two program options travel tallies 80 miles per week.

Next Steps

Identify and build awareness of problem among key stakeholders.

Identify funders and stakeholders focused on youth development and decreasing crime.

Convene stakeholders around promising practices and document model for broader implementation.

Consider strategies in marketing and promoting youth programs that might create better awareness and access.

