

Communications Study by Frameworks Institute

May 25, 2004

The Minnesota Out-of-School Time Partnership is contracting with Frameworks Institute to conduct research about current attitudes in Minnesota around Out-of-School Time issues. Frameworks' research will inform the creation of a communications strategy that will be useful to the Minnesota Commission on Out-of-School Time in creating recommendations and to the Partnership in continued work toward maximizing Out-of-School Time supports and opportunities for Minnesota children and youth. Commission input will be key in outlining the policy direction to be tested through Frameworks' research.

WHAT IS FRAMEWORKS INSTITUTE?

Frameworks is a nonprofit organization directed by Susan Nall Bales. Under her direction, the organization has synthesized four decades of social science research into an approach called "strategic frame analysis" (SFA). SFA is designed to help groups understand public perceptions or prejudices about social policy themes. Through testing and researching public response to communications messages commonly used by the media, persistent frames of reference or associations can be identified. "Frames" are based on people's deeply held preconceptions and dramatically (often unconsciously) affect their ability to hear new information.

HOW DOES FRAMEWORKS HELP GROUPS?

Frameworks surveys and analyzes past media coverage of an issue to detect patterns or frames. They use cognitive interviewing or "elicitations" in addition to conventional polling and focus groups to uncover the mental shortcuts or "frames" that condition people's response to the topic. Finally, they test out different "reframes" to learn how to open minds to new policy solutions. Often, the goal in their work is to bridge the gap between research about a given problem or concern and the social climate required to stimulate positive change. It is not a "social marketing" approach, but rather a research based process of identifying language that best promotes public support for specific policy solutions.

WHAT FRAMEWORKS WILL DO IN MINNESOTA

- 1.) Frameworks will use their survey/research process to determine commonly held beliefs of Minnesota citizens about the role of OST supports and opportunities in the development of youth.
- 2.) Based on outcomes of this research, we will learn the most effective "reframes" to use in eliciting public support for Commission recommendations and on-going efforts to maximize Out-of-School Time resources for Minnesota youth people.

HOW WILL FRAMEWORKS RESEARCH SUPPORT OUR WORK IN OST?

- 1.) We will understand how Minnesota audiences weigh-in on youth issues, compared to audiences in other states.
- 2.) We will have research about our target audience that will form that basis for a successful communications strategy.
- 3.) The Minnesota Commission on OST and others will have the necessary tools to craft recommendations in language to which the public will have the greatest receptivity.