



Stimulate Positive Youth Choices

Recommendations that would identify and create peer, family, community, and state mechanisms to support, reward, and help guide young people as well as families to more deliberately choose and use positive formal and informal out of school opportunities

The result of policy and system change in this area of choices should be grounded in impact on youth and families. As a result: **Youth and families who do not have or do not know about or who do not choose to participate in OST activities will be able to find and want to engage in positive OST opportunities.**

Critical Direction for Recommendations:

INFORMING

The first area of recommendations focus on mechanisms for **INFORMING**. Presuming OST opportunities are available, parents, youth and communities need to know what opportunities exist and what makes an opportunity a good choice in order to make intentional, positive choices about the use of OST.

1. Create a multi-purpose check list for parents, other adults and youth that identifies indicators of quality opportunities and is a tool in decision making about OST opportunities.

This will require that some respected entity (e.g., Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, a new statewide OST entity, etc.) establish statewide standards for quality OST opportunities and factors for consideration when choosing to participate in opportunities. This check list should be presented in parent- and youth-friendly, understandable language and distributed broadly through multiple venues. It's function is to educate and to guide decision making.

2. Create a centralized informational web-based resource that has the capacity to provide generic information about OST programming and specific localized information about OST opportunities.

A centralized data base of information about opportunities would provide greater and easier access to awareness of what OST opportunities are available. In addition to specific program availability, this site would also include other relevant information about making good choices. The site must be capable of giving the user information by localized geographic sites. A statewide structure like the Minnesota Athletics League might be a consideration.

3. Engage a broader network of systems and organizations in advocating for and informing families and the public about OST opportunities.

Establish new, innovative partnerships with organizations like a state Realtors Association, Automobile Association, or Minnesota Council of Nonprofits to endorse or sponsor efforts to inform the public, families and youth.

What will I look different if we succeed?

- Parents and community will have a better understanding about the value and benefits of OST and critical elements that make opportunities quality experiences.
- Parents will make more informed choices for their children; older youth will make more informed choices.
- Community understanding of OST and quality opportunities will be increased, potentially leading to greater visibility and support for OST.
- Quality of OST opportunities, esp. those provided through organized programs, will improve because of more knowledgeable “consumers.”

What Type of Funding and Accountability Strategies Would best Fit the Recommendations?

Funding is challenging, given that shrinking prevention money is available. Developing sponsoring partnerships, like a relationship with a Statewide Realtors Association, might be a potential source of funds. State funding would be established to support a statewide OST “entity.” This

entity might be responsible for developing the partner relationships as well as establishing the recommended informational systems.

Youth Recommendations:

Youth Caucus recommendations that directly relate to the “informing” recommendations include:

Youth Recommendation #2—Create a statewide entity

Youth Recommendation #3—Link statewide entity to local entities

Youth Recommendation #4—Establish quality standards

Youth Recommendation #5—Develop statewide OST public awareness

Youth Recommendation #6—Create a Web site

Recommendation #7—Establish a resource center in every county

Recommendation #10—Enlist schools in assessing opportunities and informing youth

Incentives

The second area of recommendations centers around incentives. Several questions challenged the discussion of the subgroup. They focused on systems change.

First, would incentives really change systems? Large systems, be they governmental, non-profit, or educational, rarely change because of enlightenment or awareness of benefits of change. Systems respond to problems, therefore we need to clearly articulate the “problem.” Also, Incentives have to be powerful enough to impact “self-interest” of the system in order to have significant change occur.

Second, is it our intent to “change” systems or better “engage” systems with youth and families? The latter would have a two-fold impact. Families and youth would feel more connected to systems and be more involved in decision making and choices available within the system leading to greater participation. The efficacy of systems would improve because of that involvement.

Third, should incentives or reward be directed toward youth and families rather than systems and providers of OST. Incentives at that level might have greater influence in helping youth and families make positive choices and thus, by their choices and demands, change systems.

Fourth, it is critical that understand and incorporate cultural experience and expectations in the area of incentives (as well as in all programming.) What is perceived as incentive by one community may have opposite meaning for another. Incentives must have equity, but also need to be flexible and mindful of diversity.

Incentive recommendations were divided into two areas: **INTERNAL and EXTERNAL.**

1. Provide methods to better inform and capitalize on internal benefit, Value and self-interest (by audience) for positive choice.

Mechanisms need to help OST audiences better see the value and self-interest of making positive choices. Examples include: youth - spend time with peers doing new things; feel valued by others; have voice; learn new skills that will get you a job, etc. Parents - know your decisions are contributing to child’s development.

2. Examine and put in place external incentives (appropriate to intended audience) that encourage positive choices.

A variety of external incentives must be considered. The incentive has to be of value to the recipient. This will take some investigation to determine what incentives will result in desired change. Care must be taken to craft incentives so they lead to anticipated results and not discourage participation or limit audiences. For example, a portfolio system may serve a benefit to motivated youth and employer, however it may be perceived as another hoop to jump through for a disengaged youth

These are some considerations:

- Rewards and Kudos to parents - find ways to recognize responsible family and informal community resources and choices.
- Provide a voucher or tax deduction system for parents that encourages involvement in positive OST opportunities.
- Create a portfolio system of OST accomplishments for youth - serves as a record of experience, a resume so to speak, that has advantage for employment and other future opportunities.
- Provide advantages for organizations that incorporate sound education, research and best practice in their program delivery.
- Learn from military recruitment - their strategy is personalized, persistent and provides clear, concrete rewards.

What will I look different if we succeed?

Once in place, the impact of incentives will be able to be assessed by:

- The number of individuals using incentives and the number of participants in OST opportunities.
- The changes within organizations and programs that are driven by the decisions of youth and families about OST participation based on incentives they receive.

What Type of Funding and Accountability Strategies Would best Fit the Recommendations?

Internal strategies would not require significant funding, but rather be a incorporated into marketing and communication strategies about OST. This would likely be a function of a statewide entity.

External Incentives would be impacted by governmental funding options, particularly any options that provide tax incentives or vouchers.

Youth Recommendations:

None of the Youth Caucus recommendations directly addressed “incentive” recommendations.

Involvement

The third area of recommendations involves increasing youth and parent voice and involvement in creating OST opportunities.

1. Ensure that statewide and local ly, youth and parents are

authentical ly represented in the decision making and development of OST policy and opportunities.

Statewide and local entities need to better engage recipients and participants of programs in developing and revising OST opportunities. This means including youth and parents as partners in all levels of decision-making.

What will I look different if we succeed?

Youth and parents will be visibly present and have authentic voice. It will lead to programs better aligned with grassroots need of youth and families. Greater engagement of youth and families will increase ownership and increase participation.

What Type of Funding and accountability Strategies Would best Fit the Recommendations?

This would likely be a function of state and local entities. Those entities might be best supported by consistent and long-term funding sources. Public-private partnerships might be the most logical revenue stream.

Youth Recommendations:

Youth Caucus recommendations that directly relate to the Involvement recommendation:

Youth Recommendation #2-Create a statewide entity

Youth Recommendation #3-Link statewide entity to local entities