

Practices To Keep In After-School and Youth Programs



Knitting Together School and After-School

The University Settlement - East Side Partnership



YDI

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE



Youth Development Institute

A Program of the Tides Center

1440 Broadway, Suite 1601

New York, NY 10018

(646) 943-8820

www.ydinstitute.org

Established in 1991 in New York City, the Youth Development Institute (YDI) is one of a growing number of intermediary organizations throughout the United States that seek to create a cohesive community infrastructure to support the positive development of youth. YDI approaches its work with an understanding of and a respect for the complexities of young people's lives and the critical role of youth-serving organizations in supporting young people's growth and development.

YDI's mission is to increase the capacity of communities to support the development of young people. YDI provides technical assistance, conducts research, and assists policy-makers in developing more effective approaches to support and offer opportunities to young people. At the core of YDI's work is a research-based approach to youth development. This work is asset-based in focusing on the strengths of young people, organizations and their staff. It seeks to bring together all of the resources in the lives of young people—school, community, and family—to build coherent and positive environments. The youth development framework identifies five principles that have been found to be present when youth, especially those with significant obstacles in their lives, achieve successful adulthood:

- Close relationships with adults
- High expectations
- Engaging activities
- Opportunities for contribution
- Continuity of adult supports over time

The Youth Development Institute (YDI) also strengthens non-profit organizations and public agencies and builds programs that address gaps in services, in New York City and nationally. It provides training and on-site technical assistance, conducts research, develops practice and policy innovations, and supports advocacy. This work enables organizations and agencies to apply the most promising lessons from research and practice so that they operate efficiently and the young people they serve grow and develop through powerful, sustained, and joyful experiences. YDI helps organizations to design their programs based on sound knowledge about what works and provides their leaders and staff with the information and skills to implement these strategies effectively. YDI addresses gaps in youth services by developing new programs and policies in areas and for populations that are addressed inadequately.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Knitting Together School and After-School: The University Settlement – East Side Partnership was researched and written by **Michael Chavez Reilly**, consultant to the Youth Development Institute. This is one document in a series of promising practices for the non-school hours.

We are grateful to The Atlantic Philanthropies and the Annie E. Casey Foundation for supporting YDI's Beacons National Strategy program. *Practices to Keep In After-School and Youth Programs* is a product of this effort.

The author wishes to thank the following people who contributed their time and wisdom to this report:

University Settlement Beacon Program at East Side Community High School:

Monique Flores, Beacon Director

Mark Federman, Principal of East Side Community High School

Greg Robertson, Deputy Beacon Director

Sairalyn Ansano Thong, After-School Coordinator and Art Therapist

Elisa Valentin-Guerra, 21st Century Coordinator and

Marisa Lee, Youth Advocate

All other Beacon staff and participants who allowed us to observe their work

Youth Development Institute:

Peter Kleinbard, Executive Director

Sarah Zeller-Berkman, Beacons National Strategy Director

TJ Volonis, Executive Assistant

Ellen Wahl for her work on the introduction

Special thanks to **Walis Johnson**, Former Director of Beacons National Strategy

And the rest of the staff of the Youth Development Institute

Copyright & Use

Practices to Keep In After-School and Youth Programs is a publication series of the Youth Development Institute. YDI encourages others to copy and use these materials. Please use proper attribution when doing so. Suggested citation: *Practices to Keep In After-School and Youth Programs: Knitting together School and After School: The University Settlement East Side Partnership*. Youth Development Institute, 2009. Publications in this series as well as other YDI publications are available on the YDI website at: www.ydinstitute.org.

Copyright © April 2009, Youth Development Institute, a program of the Tides Center

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Introduction | 3 |
| <i>Practices to Keep In After-School and Youth Programs</i> | |
| Knitting Together School and After-School: | 7 |
| <i>The University Settlement - East Side Partnership</i> | |
| The Beacons Movement and Youth Programming | 15 |

1

Introduction

1. INTRODUCTION

Practices to Keep In After-School and Youth Programs is a series of documentation reports that highlight successful approaches in Beacons, which are community centers in school buildings that combine youth and community development to support young people, families, and neighborhoods. Developed for Beacons, these approaches are also widely used in the expanding world of After-School and Youth Programs.

The reports demonstrate how local ingenuity applied to key issues over time can leverage individual, neighborhood, and policy change. They contain ideas for practitioners to adapt to their own programs and for policymakers who seek practical responses to critical concerns—literacy and academic support for youth, preparation for work and participation in the labor force, strengthening families and preventing foster care placement, and creating opportunities to play important roles that strengthen the fabric of community social organization.

The Beacons Movement and After-School Programming

Beacons were first established in New York City in 1991 as part of the Safe Cities Safe Streets program. Located in schools and operated by community-based organizations with core funding provided by New York City, the Beacons represent an innovative collaboration between the public and non-profit sectors to turn the school building into a true public resource. Today, more than 100 Beacons in five cities offer education, recreation, adult education, arts, and family programming after school, before school, on weekends, and during vacations. In New York City, Beacons serve more than 150,000 children, youth, and adults annually. Nationally they reach more than 250,000 individuals in San Francisco, Minneapolis, Denver, and West Palm Beach, Florida.

The Beacons forge partnerships across public, non-profit, and private institutions to fortify neighborhoods. They create pathways for participation between age groups and a continuum of programming that promotes healthy development and strong families. They contribute to local economic development by providing jobs to young people and adults. They help to make neighborhoods safe and connect residents to each other and to local resources. At a time when social services are increasingly located outside of the communities that need them, the Beacons serve as a hub for an array of social and educational supports.

Funding for the Beacon programs described in *Practices to Keep* comes from a wide variety of sources. The range demonstrates a commitment by both the public and private sectors to the comprehensive work of Beacons, with support located in education, labor, child welfare, and human services. Sources include:

- Local tax levy
- Local, state, and federal foster care
- Private foundations
- Public-school dollars
- State after-school funding sources
- Summer Youth Employment Program (OTDA, US DOL)
- Supplemental Education Services, part of No Child Left Behind (US DOE)
- 21st Century Community Learning Centers (US DOE)

- Youth Development and Delinquency Prevention (NYSOYD)
- Workforce Investment Act: In-School Youth; Out-of-School Youth; Literacy (USDOL)

The need for the Beacons and other programs that build on similar principles is more urgent today than ever. The economic crisis that began in 2008 has affected every sector of society, but will inevitably hit hardest in poor communities where the Beacons are located. Too often, services are removed from the very neighborhoods where they are needed most. The Beacons place services in the center of poor communities. The gains that the Beacons help create must be protected, as the need for comprehensive and coordinated services, high quality education and work preparation, and community safety increases. The Beacons have earned the trust and respect of local residents and provide a tested infrastructure for attaching additional or consolidated programs.

Practices to Keep In After-School and Youth Programs illustrates how Beacons provide young people with pathways to increasingly responsible roles, involve youth and adults in improving their communities, and create environments of support to keep families together.



Knitting Together School and After-School

The University Settlement - East Side Partnership

2. KNITTING TOGETHER SCHOOL AND AFTER-SCHOOL

A partnership on the Lower East Side of New York shows how a school and community organization can integrate staff, resources, and will to create academic and employment opportunities.

As schools face pressure to improve reading and math test scores, many have had to cut back on resources dedicated to the arts, community engagement, and physical education. Yet, research has shown that some students find their greatest levels of engagement and joy in school by using their visual, interpersonal, and spatial intelligences (Gardner, 1983). That is where a Beacon can come in. East Side Community High School (ESCHS) is one school that has been under pressure to raise test scores and has done it successfully. With the help and partnership of the University Settlement Beacon, this achievement has not come at the expense of a well-rounded education. In addition to supporting student's academic achievement through after-school tutoring, the Beacon has provided a rich variety of activities for students to gain skills and experience in areas beyond traditional academic subjects.

Principal Mark Federman of ESCHS is taking a break between meetings when he stops to explain why he considers the University Settlement Beacon (USB) an integral part of his school:

Why wouldn't the Beacon be an integral part of our school? For us, it makes our high school richer; it is an important resource to our young people and our families. Many of our students grow up in housing projects; many come from single parent families. They face the

effects of poverty, classism and racism on a daily basis. The Beacon helps provide the extra support that more advantaged youth naturally have in their communities.

Principal Federman points out that colleges now reward excellence in extracurricular achievements:

For students to get in to and succeed in college these days, not only do they have to have a decent SAT score and GPA, but they also have to participate in extra-curricular activities and get recommendations that display the well-roundedness of their education. Unlike students in other neighborhoods, our students do not have a parent with a Volvo who can drive them around to soccer matches after school. What we do have is an after-school program on site that provides a variety of interesting and great programs. It offers students an opportunity to engage in activities that really do make them more "well-rounded." And IT'S FOR FREE. So why wouldn't I think of it as an invaluable resource to this school?

Beacon Structure & Programming

On a typical school day, the University Settlement Beacon (USB) serves an average of 100 elementary school-aged youth, 100 middle school-aged youth, and 60 high school-aged youth from 3-6 pm.¹ For the first part of the afternoon, the elementary-school and middle-school youth engage

in homework help, tutoring, and other academic programs run by East Side teachers. But for the second part of the afternoon, the two groups come together to engage in a wide variety of inter-generational activities executed with the help of 60 East Side high school students who serve as Group Leaders, Assistant Group Leaders, and Leaders-in-Training. In this way the USB purposefully develops an intergenerational community. Activities in the second part of the afternoon range from the creative arts such as music, dance, art, and drama classes; physical activities such as basketball, soccer, baseball, swimming, track, and physical fitness; a variety of community service projects; cooking; yearbook; chess; conflict resolution; and special events such as a community-wide talent show and an end-of-the-year carnival.

How the East Side – University Beacon Partnership Grew

This multi-layered set of activities did not happen overnight. Monique Flores, USB's Director, started the program at East Side eight years ago with one small group of students. "I had to prove myself to the school. I had to show them that the Beacon is amazing even with very little money." USB staff member Sairalyn Thong reflects on how the Beacon grew, "We learned to offer activities that other programs didn't – the arts, baseball, and record production." She also points out a particularly successful marketing technique within the school building, "We take pictures of the activities that youth do here (such as going swimming, dancing, making art, etc.) so when the new kids come and see that they say, 'Cool! I want to do that!'" It was not long before word spread among students that the Beacon was a fun place to be. Students recruited other students and since then says Sairalyn, "Beacon participation has grown like a virus."

In addition to offering activities youth wanted, Flores needed support from two key people. The first

was East Side's principal Mark Federman. Flores advises new Beacon directors:

It is a day-in and day-out relationship with the principal. At the beginning of every school year I meet with the principal and I ask him 'What do you need from us? What exactly are the needs of the kids in the school?' I listen very closely and take that into consideration as we design programs and write grants. I tell people 'Make it clear what's in it for him.' His students need jobs so we make sure we have enough high school programming. This keeps them in the school building and engaged. A lot of our staff are his high school students and we even hire teachers. It's a win-win.

Principal Federman concurs: "Since ESCHS started, the institutional relationship between University Settlement and the school has meant that all of our middle school teachers can be paid to stay later. This extends the school day and widens the curriculum." Both Federman and Flores believe this has been a crucial catalyst in fostering collaboration between the school and Beacon staff. "The teachers' work with us during after-school time has won a lot of them over," says Flores. "They have seen first hand how the Beacon often provides that necessary incentive to keep kids focused on success in school. And they have especially seen its direct influence on the 60 kids that work in the Beacon. They have come to see us as the social helpers for academic success."

Flores sees this link as so important that when the original University Settlement grant ended in 2007, Flores stepped in and allocated money from a different Beacon grant to pay for the continuation of teacher stipends. Through the new grant,

the Beacon was able to hire all of East Side's middle-school teachers to work at least one day a week in the after-school program. This has preserved program continuity for both teachers and youth. The approximately 20 teachers who work in the Beacon not only provide academic help, but also manage art classes, sports, and conflict resolution groups.

Institutional Support

Flores gives credit for teacher stipend funding to Michael Zisser, the Executive Director of University Settlement, the Beacon's lead agency. With his approval, University Settlement used grant money from the very beginning of the Beacon to pay stipends for East Side's teachers to teach in the Beacon's after-school program. Zisser was the second key person Flores needed support from.

“A critical part of the formula for success is to have a lead agency that really helps and supports you,” says Flores.

Michael Zisser, the Executive Director at University Settlement is incredibly supportive. For me, what was critical in terms of support was high expectations (one of my bosses told me - “you better be perfect!”) with an incredible amount of support designed to help me be perfect. When I started I had no experience. I was lucky enough to have a boss that trusted me, that believed in me. Actually I had two supervisors – one reminded me I had better do well, and the other gave me the self-confidence I needed. The lead agency takes a strong interest in developing their staff. This year they paid for me to go to an international conference in Finland. They work to develop the

staff at all levels. So now I try to mirror the mentoring I got.

Youth Employment & Leadership Development

Another foundation to the USB's success has been its dedication to employing East Side's young people. “I am a firm believer that kids need experience working—they need money and work that is productive,” says Flores. USB hires 60 young people during the school year and 40 during the summer through the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). “Students want to work with us so we create positions. Last summer in addition to SYEP monies we had funding for the Scholars-in-Training program and the NYT Scholars Fund – all these were used to fund jobs. We also committed to paying them for their work through stipends.” One quarter of the Beacon's budget, \$250,000, goes directly to pay for jobs for young people.

Principal Federman observes:

The Beacon is especially helpful in providing opportunities for our middle-school students. We are a grade-six-to-twelve school. Beacon staff help us organize and staff field trips, it trains middle-school students on how to be leaders, gives them experience as leaders, and also helps run a job program for youth (including after-school positions and summer positions at the Beacon and SYEP referrals as well).

In explaining how youth workers become leaders, Flores says:

The key is supervision. You have to start with high expectations and insist on good supervisory training for the youth

workers. Every Wednesday, once a week, the Leaders-In-Training meet as a group, as do the group leaders. We are constantly training staff and adding requirements as they become necessary. We also create clear roles so that each level of young person has a responsibility, with the older ones benefiting the younger ones [in a system of mentoring].

Building References for the Future

This cumulative ladder of training pays off for young people as they get older:

Colleges love the kind of work and extra-curricular activities young people engage in here. [Assistant Director] Greg Robertson and I have written many, many college letters of recommendation for youth. In addition we've written recommendations for the Bill Gates Scholarship, and for one of our students who won a Posse Scholarship which was worth \$150,000. Students can also write about the many opportunities for leadership they've had here when they apply to college. For example, at a recent trip to Albany, one young person got to talk to the Secretary of Education about the budget cuts. There was even an article about it. Youth can write about serving on the Youth Council, or their work with United Neighborhood Houses—they can write about how all of these activities have moved them forward.

Successful alumni often come back during, or after, their college years to give back to the Beacon. Flores mentions a Wellesley graduate who has recently returned as well as the current head

of their basketball program. Both teachers and students appreciate such role models.

Using the Community as a Resource

Importantly, the Beacon's lead agency, University Settlement, is a well-established local social service agency. This connection allows the USB staff to tap into a host of local community organizations and resources that help young people (and their parents). Resource people are brought in to help run activities or workshops (such as dance and arts specialists, experts in technical areas, parents with special sets of skills, community organizers, activists, and local business people). In addition, a wide variety of partner organizations co-locate at the Beacon² including: Felix Millan Little League, Taíno Wakanan Cultural Center, City At Peace, Urban Homesteading Assistance Board, Village Play Back Theatre, NYU tutoring Program, Cetiliztli Nauhcampa Aztec Danza, Power Play Girls Sports, Teachers and Writers Collaborative, and Perri Dance. These co-locating agencies bring with them an additional 42 instructional staff who can serve as potential mentors that can expose youth to a wide variety of activities and career paths. Flores has also created a "budget for specialists" with which she can bring in teaching artists and staff.

USB is also part of larger networks that help provide opportunities for Beacon staff and youth. Flores has sought out many. "We get trainings, workshops, and resources from: the Youth Development Institute, Ryan Nena, LOISAIDA Inc., Roberto Clemente, Planned Parenthood, Day One, The Door, PASE, TASC, etc. We collaborate with Madison Square Garden and have our teens participate in a dance talent show, NIKE girls basketball tournaments, many other sports tournaments (basketball, LYS Soccer, Baseball with Pinnacle League, etc.). We collaborate with UNH to do advocacy trips to Albany, we participate in a DYCD Book Club (we won first place for a poetry

²Co-locators are outside agencies that need free space and provide activities free of charge for the community.

submission last year), and the Immigration Lawyer Association contest (we have won the past two years for writing submissions).” Delivering such a wide range of activities to young people has burnished the Beacon's reputation across many groups within the school.

Extra Grants & Grant-Writing

“Another one of my roles is to show funders what superior quality looks like. I started with \$400,000, and our budget has tripled in the last three years,” Monique Flores says proudly. Federman points out “Monique [Flores] has been the lead grant writer on a lot of grants. She is great at collaboration. If they spot funding opportunities, they will point them out to us.” A recent grant written by USB has allowed East Side to fund a middle-school coordinator who tracks down youth who are skipping the after-school program and keeps parents informed of their whereabouts. Like the teacher and youth positions, this is all money and resources that would not come into the school otherwise.

Hard Work and a Shared Vision

While the East Side-USB accomplishments are impressive, they are most importantly the product of a shared commitment and a lot of hard work. Federman believes he is “fortunate to be working with a Beacon staff who above all care about young people and who are COMMITTED to building a partnership within the building. I view the Beacon as an essential part of the school—so this necessitates that we work closely together. We both understand that we have to make this work for the young people. There is no alternative.” When asked if USB is different from other after-school programs he's worked with, Federman reflects:

There is a different level of communication. The dialogue is much closer. They are ‘right there’ with you helping you

problem-solve and brainstorm solutions. For example, they are currently helping us organize our parent's fair. If there are needs in the school, they will look for opportunities and bring them to the school. Also, if certain activities or field trips stretch beyond the school day, I know I can rely on them to be here in the building to make it possible to do the activity even if it goes into the evening. Basically, our cooperation expands the time available for programming and the flexibility available for staff.

Needless to say, neither Flores nor Federman have nine-to-five jobs. Both report a lot of late night phone calls and emails to problem-solve around particular youth dilemmas. “We engage in a LOT of ongoing feedback.” says Federman. “Monique and I email each other on average every 2 – 3 days, or about twice a week. We are also at the same school meetings about once a week (more towards the beginning of the school year). We have an open and ongoing conversation.” Indeed, the USB staff are treated more like another department in the school than a separate organization.

For their part, Flores and her staff try to remain highly attuned to the needs of the school. “Last year, ESCHS was designated a school in need of improvement. The principal has enough on his plate without having to worry about grant writing or running an after-school program. So my job is to help him reach those goals. We capitalized on the school's status as a “school in need of improvement” as we wrote grants. This year, the school got an “A” in terms of progress.”

A student's performance in school has to come first, both Flores and Federman agree. “If a student is spending too much time at the Beacon

and neglecting studying or their homework, we can work on an agreement that the student can't participate in programs until they get their grades up. This serves as an incentive. The Beacon staff support us in that," says Federman. "On the other hand, if a student is struggling academically but doing really well in a Beacon activity, Beacon staff let the teachers know it—it helps provide a more well-rounded, human picture of the student. So we try to connect success at the Beacon and success in school." Federman sees the Beacon as having a particularly important impact on at-risk students, "We could go down to the Beacon right now and I could identify ten kids who would already have dropped out or be failing in school, or skipping class, if it wasn't for the Beacon program."

Despite this shared vision, the partnership is not without its tensions. Flores reports that finding the balance between the school's need for more academic tutoring and the youth development focus on community service, creative expression, and leadership skills is not always easy:

Finding [a] balance is very hard. There are more academic requirements for OST funding every year. The principals are being pressured to increase academic programming. There is no easy answer. We do our best to balance the academic and the non-academic. During the summer, we are able to increase our non-academic offerings, like having more teaching artists come in. Also during the summer, our activities for the middle schoolers are often literacy-based, but for the elementary schoolers our curriculum is closer to that of day camp activities.

Different Institutions with the Same Goals

The East Side – University Settlement Beacon partnership has brought together two organizations that have great mutual respect for what each other does. They understand that a young

person's academic and social/emotional development is both critical to young people's success. "Why does the partnership work? I believe a school needs to want it," says Federman. "If a school and its principal don't want it, then it won't work. That's my impression from talking to other principals. It must run well, otherwise it's just more for the principal to worry about. Why? Well, because you are giving up space in your building, and the principal/school staff is responsible for the building. If there are problems at the Beacon, then you, as the principal, end up having to solve them, and that's taxing on people's time and energy. So in that way a poorly run program can become a burden."

Flores sees the formula for success for a Beacon composed of three essential ingredients, "A Beacon director passionate about the work, plus a lead agency who believes in the work and will put up the money, plus a principal who has bought-in. All three of these components need to be there for the Beacon to really be successful. If any one of them is missing, it becomes very hard."

For more information on the University Settlement Beacon at East Side Community High School, contact Monique Flores: (212) 598-4533.

3

Beacons Movement and
Youth Programming

The Beacons Movement and Youth Programming

Beacons forge partnerships across public, non-profit, and private institutions to fortify neighborhoods. They create pathways for participation across age groups and a continuum of programming that promotes healthy development and strong families. They provide jobs to young people and adults, which contribute to local economic development. They help to make neighborhoods safe and connect residents to each other and to local resources. At a time when social services are increasingly located outside of the communities that need them, they serve as a hub for an array of social and educational supports.

Beacons were among the first citywide after-school initiatives. The massive expansion of after-school programs that began in 1992 was fueled in part by the early example of the Beacon movement. But while after-school programs use a service-delivery approach, Beacons use a comprehensive community development model with a focus on youth development. Activities in every area, from after-school to adult education, are embedded in the process of building community that:

- Supports and engages local youth.
- Feels a sense of ownership, with a desire to convert a school building into a community center.
- Recognizes and supports community resources, builds the capacity of youth and other community members to identify needs, address issues, and capitalize on different strengths.

The Beacons, while diverse and responsive to neighborhood interests and strengths, are shaped by a core set of youth development principles that

research has shown help people to achieve stronger outcomes: caring relationships, high expectations, opportunities to contribute, engaging activities, and continuity in relationships.

As a result of their experience in developing Beacons, many organizations that started as “mom and pop” associations in response to neighborhood needs now offer extensive family and youth-supporting services including foster care, drop out prevention, summer youth employment, and out-of-school time activities. In New York City and San Francisco, these organizations advance school reform efforts. Applying youth development principles and a commitment to the success of all students, they have helped to reshape high schools, making them more personalized, and sharply increasing graduation rates among youth who previously would have dropped out.

The Beacons provide multiple opportunities for young people to build the 21st-century skills that are essential to their development and success as workers, citizens, and environmental stewards. They help young people respond to the changing demands of the workplace and the increased need for post-secondary education. In Beacons, young people:

- Work in teams, solve problems, and master critical skills.
- Take on powerful roles that make a difference to their peers and their communities
- Get involved in planning projects, assessing their communities, analyzing results, and taking action to address local problems.
- Master core literacy skills in reading, writing, media, and technology.
- Teach, mentor, and serve as role models for younger children.
- Collaborate with adults around important issues.

All these opportunities build the skills and knowledge the next generation needs to succeed in the 21st century and to sustain the well-being of the nation and earth.

Each Beacon city also includes an intermediary organization that provides training and support to the Beacon and works with policy makers to sustain the vision. For example, in New York City, the Youth Development Initiative, is one such intermediary that offers training and coaching to sites, develops programs, and works with the city and advocacy groups to support best practices. In San Francisco, the San Francisco Beacon Initiative, convenes a citywide group of leaders in philanthropy and public agencies to build support for the Beacons, raise funds, and provide training and related supports to sites.

Evidence of Success & Continuing Need

Evaluations in New York and San Francisco find that Beacons attract participants of all ages, many of whom attend on a regular basis. Participation by substantial numbers of adolescents, traditionally the hardest to recruit and retain in out-of-school programs, is the result of adherence to youth development principles. Among adolescents, the Beacons increase young people's self-efficacy and the level of effort they put into school, which are both critical factors in school success and persistence (Walker & Arbureton, 2004). They provide extensive homework help, enrichment activities that build skills and knowledge, and connections with schools and families on academic issues (Warren, 1999, pp 3-6). They help youth avoid negative behaviors such as drug use and fighting, and foster leadership and provide opportunities for volunteering and contributing to community (Ibid, p. 5). In neighborhoods like Red Hook in Brooklyn, where residents were once afraid to leave their apartments at night, the Beacon is not only a haven, but has, through its programs and networks, made the whole commu-

nity safer (see *Practices to Keep: Preventing Placement in Foster Care: Strengthening Family and Community Ties*. Youth Development Institute, 2009).

The need for Beacons and other programs that build on similar principles is more urgent today than ever. The economic crisis that began in 2008 has affected every sector of society, but will inevitably hit poor communities where Beacons are located the hardest. Too often, services are removed from the very neighborhoods where they are needed most. The Beacons place services in the center of poor communities. The gains that Beacons helped create must be protected, as need increases for comprehensive and coordinated services, high quality education, work preparation, and community safety. Beacons have earned the trust and respect of the local residents, and provide a tested infrastructure for attaching additional or consolidating programs.

Practices to Keep illustrates how Beacons provide young people with pathways to increasingly responsible roles, involve youth and adults in improving their communities, and create environments of support to keep families together. They all depend on partnerships and all recognize that their impact is inextricably tied to collective action. All told, these efforts add up to potent forces for local economic development and building cohesive communities.