

conducted research on models and best practices across the country and interviewed parents, school staff and public and private providers. Their report sets out an ideal model for OST.

Ms. Walser asked what happened with the proposed model. According to Ms. Herold, the city identified the Harrington School as the site for the model, based on assessment of where the need was greatest, and funded its implementation. However, the school staff charged with implementing it did not participate in the Mills & Pardee work and there has been a disconnect between the model and the program. Ms. Herold also described the Summary of the Action Plan as a proposal prepared by the Agenda for Children staff with a focus on literacy and OST.

Councillor Simmons commented that the amount of information was overwhelming. The immediate issue is what services the city provides for parents and families in the summer. Ms. Keegan responded that two of twelve city programs will begin on June 24, with the rest beginning after July 4.

Ms. Wong noted that there was a meeting last Thursday, May 30, at the Maynard Fletcher Academy, in which school principals raised the issue of transportation as a factor in providing after-school services. The principals emphasized the need for better connections between schools and providers after school.

Ms. Eirich then focussed on Melody Brazo's Spring 2002 List of Elementary Achievement After-School Resources, which includes both academic and non-academic achievement city programs. Parents constantly ask Ms. Brazo what resources are available. She put the list together in response to this demand by asking community school principals what achievement-oriented programs were offered at their schools. Programs were listed at their discretion. Despite all the offerings, there is still a communication gap and parents and community liaisons are not aware of everything available.

Councillor Simmons emphasized that it is important to know what a term encompasses, since lists are based on different definitions of terms such as "enrichment". The committee needs to develop clear criteria for terms, to know what programs are included.

Ms. Shoy stated that some programs are jointly initiated by a school and a community, and then run collaboratively. Sometimes the captions for the list of programs are puzzling, because terms such as "achievement" are not standard. Ms. Walser pointed out that in some programs, the funding source defines the terms. Several members of the committee agreed about the need to understand exactly what programs are being offered and under what conditions, whatever general term is used to describe them. Ms. Richards Scott proposed that lists include all OST programs; they are all "achievement" programs in some sense because they enhance children's connections to school. Councillor Simmons suggests that another way to identify resources is to include everything that takes place in school buildings.

Ms. DeRosa asked whether parents currently receive a list of all in-school programs and resources. Councillor Simmons responded that some schools provide a brochure listing resources they have identified. These lists are not comprehensive. Ms. Eirich noted that, in her experience as an acting principal, programs did not all start at the beginning of the school year, some developed randomly. There was no comprehensive, up-to-date database on them. Ms. Bibbins added that there are various sources of programs: community schools, public schools, child care providers. There may be separate booklets available on each of these; parents may not get the big picture of what's available in a single source.

Ms. Walser identified four stages of information gathering for the committee: (1) come up to speed on what's been done to study OST programs, (2) get ideas on next steps, including reviewing national models, and the recommendations in the Cambridge reports, (3) decide on next steps, given the information available, and (4) decide how to fill gaps in information, especially the needs of parents and school staff. Ms. Walser stated that the school system has not done a good job of including staff in the process of developing programs. She referred to a school study being conducted by Harry Spence, which emphasizes the need to address staff development, in order to keep kids safe, involved and successful.

Ms. DeRosa commented that it would be useful if each program representative on the committee conducted a survey in their own programs. Her program serves 40 families. Each provider could ask basic questions about access, programming, cost and availability. Even if questions are different across programs, this information could complement the school-based information. She does not want to lose the opportunity to learn about summer programs. Councillor Simmons followed up on this suggestion by asking who would conduct the surveys and how, how the committee could get a common understanding across programs, and how the surveys would be funded. Ms. DeRosa envisions a low-tech survey, of perhaps five to eight questions for parents and kids, maybe supplemented with parent focus groups. The questions would concentrate on kids' summer plans, and how they work out. Ms. DeRosa pointed out that programs do evaluations all the time. Her proposed survey would just enhance those efforts. Even though the survey would not be scientific, it would have the advantage of getting information from parents through providers who have an ongoing relationship with families; this information could supplement more formal efforts. Ms. Shoy endorsed the idea of a parent survey by providers.

Ms. Walser noted that every piece of data can add to the picture. She believes that the committee really needs to do a "scorch the earth" professional-quality survey in order to get an accurate picture of city OST resources. The city can build anything, but the question is whether people will come.

Ms. Neel raised another possible source of less formal information: the Action Plan team recommended asking elementary school kids what they planned to do in the summer. The Physical Education department could conduct the survey, since they see all

the kids. How reliable this information is can depend on the age of the child, since some children may answer with their fantasy vacation plans.

Ms. Walser asked why the group wanted to know what children were doing vs. what families need. Ms. Neel stated that the questions should get to the issue of the use of resources: is what we offer what people need? Are services used to capacity? If not, why not?

Ms. Richards Scott then described two current projects to collect data on OST needs and resources. First, the survey of parents recommended by the city's Action Plan on OST is in the final stages of development. The survey identifies what kids are doing after school, and where. It is meant to establish a baseline of where the 5000 or so schoolkids are after school, by sampling the population in kindergarten to eighth grade. The survey will determine such numbers as the percentage of kids at home after school, those in day care, parents with full day care coverage, those who have to piece together babysitting, and the numbers of children who are providing day care for their younger siblings. It will be sent to parents in the fall, probably in October, with analysis of results in November. Councillor Simmons emphasized that she wants to avoid a disconnect between this needs assessment survey and the committee's work.

The second initiative is the database DHSP is compiling, which will inventory current resources. Ms. Herold is working on ways of collecting information as well as providing it in ongoing updates. Letters will be sent to providers this summer, including health and human service offices in Cambridge and Somerville. The goal is to provide information on resources for families, which they can access by specific service or program. An inventory of resources done in 1999 of licenses and program slots will be updated as part of this database.

Ms. Simmons raised the concern that the questions posed in the surveys do not get to the issue of what parents need or want for services. Although parents and children are asked what they do for day care, or what barriers exist to using services, they must be asked directly what they need or want. This question pertains to both the existence of programs and their substance. If the committee agrees that this is the question, how do we get this information? Ms. Herold restated this concern as a question, not about what is, but what could be, and what parents' ideal OST programs would be. One way to get this information is to ask parents what they want ideally. The survey should not set up expectations of what is possible, but provide multiple choices.

Ms. Walser stated that her experience was that parents do not want specific programs but rather neighborhood activity, and a feeling of community, where children stay at school after classes, go to the playground and play until the parents pick them up. She observed that kids' lives are often so highly structured that they cannot direct their own activities, when left on their own. Ms. Shoy noted that she has received the same request for unstructured community activity in Cambridgeport. However, this "model" has run into trouble with details such as who has responsibility for organizing and controlling activities, with major disagreements about how to run such a program. Ms. Bibbins remarked that the type of experience described by Ms. Walser would not be

captured by current surveys. The challenge is how to formulate questions in such a way that you can tabulate results.

Councillor Simmons also suggested that programs and agencies coordinate their information gathering. Ms. Shoy stated that any coordinated survey should leave room for organizations to ask specific questions to get information useful to them. Ms. Richards Scott, speaking from a parent's perspective, emphasized that parents will want to know how information is going to be used, and especially that it will be used to improve a program. A school survey can be intimidating, and make parents wonder what's going on, or raise expectations.

Ms. Keegan noted that the community schools are conducting a survey of parents of the 900 or so children enrolled in summer camp, which will identify gaps in services in summer programs. Ms. Herold asked if this survey could be coordinated with other camps. The committee needs to be able to compare information from diverse surveys. Ms. Richards Scott also referred to the group of eight community organizations that are sponsoring summer camps and running parents' focus groups as part of the Agenda for Children's community outreach effort, and as an ideal group to survey.

Ms. Simmons then summarized the ongoing work and the next steps for the committee. The following actions were agreed upon:

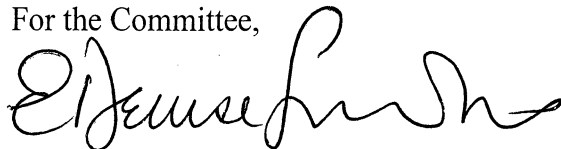
- Councillor Simmons asked the group to organize a subcommittee to survey summer programs, develop a simple, basic set of key questions, identify who should participate in the survey, and create a questionnaire for dissemination. Essentially, the subcommittee will decide what to ask, who, and when. The subcommittee will also try to use the eight organizations sponsoring summer camps as a focus group to determine what parents want, outside of specific questions. Mss. DeRosa, Eirich, Herold, Keegan, and Richards Scott are the members of this subcommittee.
- Ms. Richards Scott will continue to work with Mary Ellen Colton, a consultant with the Child Care Resource Center, on the survey of current OST arrangements for schoolchildren.
- Group members will e-mail suggestions for basic questions to discover what parents really want for OST (not just what they presently have) to Ms. Richards Scott to see if they can be incorporated into the fall survey of current OST arrangements.
- City Clerk Drury will generate a list of e-mails for participants.
- Ms. Walser will provide information from out-of-state OST programs she intends to look at over the summer.

- In September, the committee will reconvene to review the results of the summer surveys and to check on the status of the fall survey. The committee will decide then if it needs more information about what parents and kids want, how to get this information, who will get it, when, and how to synthesize it for the committee. One possibility raised by Ms. Walser is that the committee could commission its own survey if it decides that other surveys do not capture the information it wants.
- Any OST reports provided to the City Clerk by the members will be kept on file in five notebooks in the clerk's office.

On a more general note, Councillor Simmons emphasized that it is important to talk to the people who work in the programs, and that this information should be brought to the committee's September meeting. Ms. Richards Scott noted current efforts to bridge gaps between school and OST links and to create more systemic ways of networking for providers. There are lots of doors opening in this field, with greater resource-sharing. Cambridge can support these efforts through this committee's work. She would like to report on this link to the Committee in the fall. In a related issue, Councillor Simmons stated that the committee needs to use a common language and develop a glossary in describing programs.

Ms. Simmons scheduled the next meeting of the committee for Tuesday, September 17, 2002, at 9:30 A.M. in the Ackermann Room. Councillor Simmons thanked all those present for their participation. The meeting was adjourned at 1:20 P.M.

For the Committee,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Denise Simmons", written in a cursive style.

Councillor E. Denise Simmons, Chair

City of Cambridge

HUMAN SERVICES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Councillor E. Denise Simmons, Chair
Councillor Marjorie C. Decker
Councillor Anthony D. Galluccio*

In City Council July 29, 2002

The Human Services Committee held a public hearing on June 4, 2002, beginning at 11:15 A.M. in the Ackermann Room for the purpose of discussing the work of the committee for this term.

Present at the hearing were Councillor E. Denise Simmons, Chair of the Committee, School Committee Member Nancy Walser, City Clerk D. Margaret Drury and Elaine McGrath, Clerk's Office. Also present were Judy Bibbins, Department of Human Services (DHS)-Community Schools, Jackie Neel, DHS, Roslyn Shoy, Program Director, Community Schools, Mary Eirich, Cambridge Public Schools, Susan Richards Scott, Agenda for Children, Elaine DeRosa, CEOC Director, Tina Alu, CEOC, Mary Wong, Director of the Kids' Council, Eileen Keegan, Division Head of the Community Schools Division, DHS, Jill Herold, Assistant City Manager for Human Services, and Liza Paden, 6 Theriault Ct., Cambridge, citizen.

Councillor Simmons convened the hearing by referencing the goals set at the last meeting on May 7, 2002. These were to collect all the reports available on out-of-school (OST) and after-school activity, and to specifically see what is available in the summer and after school. She will review the reports with Ms. Walser, and ask committee members to be responsible for reading and summarizing parts of the material. The committee needs to digest the reports over the summer and then resume meetings in September. Referring to the list of reports supplied with the minutes of the May 7, 2002 meeting, she asked if any members could describe the contents of the reports.

Ms. Eirich commented that although she is not in a position to distill the school reports, just a review of the list of reports was eye-opening. So much legwork has been done again and again since the late 1990's, especially on OST programs. The 1999 Mills & Pardee report, Planning Out-of-School Time Programs in Cambridge, A Report to the Cambridge School Department and the Department of Human Service Programs, is exceptional in its analysis of OST resources.

Ms. Herold described the 1999 Mills & Pardee report as one of the earliest official efforts to look at how the city handles OST. At the time, there was a new school superintendent, who contacted Ms. Herold about the issue of OST, and worked to engage the schools in OST programs. In an RFP selection process, Mills & Pardee was awarded the contract to do the study. This company, a national leader in the educational field,

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Committee Report #1

Committee Report from Councillor
E. Denise Simmons, Chair of the
Human Services Committee, for a
meeting held on June 4, 2002 for
the purpose of discussing the work
of the committee for this term.

In City Council July 29, 2002

**REPORT ACCEPTED.
PLACED ON FILE.**