

**MAJOR FINDINGS:
YEAR TWO EVALUATION OF
PUBLIC ACHIEVEMENT, 2000-2001**

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation report builds upon what we learned last year. Overall, our major findings from last year—namely that Public Achievement (PA) can be a profound and possibly transformative experience for youth and coaches—has been confirmed. While last year we focused in youth team members, this year our research foci are on sites and on coaching.

ETHOS OF PUBLIC ACHIEVEMENT

Public Achievement is based on the idea of public work— the idea that “ordinary” people, acting together, have the talents, capacities, and insights to make a difference in the world in which they live. This work embodies the ethos of democracy and non-violence, that is, work must be done democratically, it must use democratic methods, and should be legal, non-violent, and respectful. Participants at all levels of Public Achievement develop plans for action, implement, and evaluate their work within this ethos. For young people, PA is experienced both in terms of hope and power. There is hope in seeing the world as a place where you can take action, and power in taking action, and changing the conditions of one’s existence.

MAJOR FINDINGS:

Sites

We were struck by the dedication of site teams, all of which were working hard to improve their sites and develop better ways of doing PA. We also saw how site teams encountered real obstacles and barriers that made this work difficult to sustain, much less deepen or improve **over time**.

This year we examined the particular obstacles and barriers, paying particular attention to structural constraints. The school, as an organization, has profound impact on how Public Achievement is organized and carried out, and school structure, culture, climate, population, staff and administration are all elements which PA site teams must negotiate, and which evaluation must attend to.

The most crucial constraint (and variable) may be time. Secondary barriers include competing curricular and extra-curricular priorities, lack of linkages between PA and curriculum, difficulties with communication within a site and between the site and coach

pool, the structural position of the site coordinator / site team, physical space, etc.

This report details the particulars of these structural constraints and their sources, and offers options to engage these on the policy and practice levels. It is only by making these constraints visible that informed decisions can be made in how to deal with them. We suggest that sites both examine what they realistically can do within such restraints, and how they might work to expand or change such constraints in relation to PA. The consequences are real for how PA is organized now and in the future.

Coaching

Last year coaches told us about how difficult coaching is, and that the orientation and training did little to prepare them in how to work with their groups of young people. We heard that again this year, and have come up with the counter-intuitive hypothesis that this experience of “not knowing” how to work with young people is one of the things that makes PA “work.” It is the process of having to figure out with the group how to work together that creates the “democratic” group. We saw again how Public Achievement can be a profound and possibly transformative for both youth and coaches.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Sites:

We recommend that sites, with consultation from PA staff, continue to set their own expectations and goals within the specific context and constraints of their site. By determining their own course of planning, implementation, and evaluation, sites can be more intentional about innovation and have an evaluative framework to assess what they have done. The focus should be on improvement or development over time.

We also recommend that site teams and Public Achievement staff take an inventory of the structural constraints that impact how Public Achievement is done at a particular site. They can then weigh which constraints can be changed and at what costs. Sites can make work plans that are more realistic about what can be done and more systematic at changing the structural constraints that limit a full flourishing PA.

We finally recommend that this site based work be done in conversation with and complementary to the PA project as a whole. This highlights the need for PA to provide effective technical assistance, record and share of practice wisdom, provide opportunities for people to work together, and help sites procure necessary resources.

Regional and/or National Policy Implications:

There are several broader policy responses that address the structural realities that PA faces in working in schools. Each response has real consequences to what PA is, how it is practiced, and how technical assistance, training, and consultation are organized at the national and local levels. Of course, none of these policy options is exclusive of the others, but any decision to pursue a particular should include ways to evaluate its effectiveness. Possible policy options include:

1. Continue to refine / professionalize practices as currently practiced in sites. This calls for an honest discussion about what can and should be expected for PA at each individual site. These discussions should take into account the unique contexts of each site, as well as a site's vision for doing PA. Different sites do PA for different reasons, and that is fine, but this does impact the goals and expectations for PA at a site.
2. Develop sites in addition to and in complement with schools, including formal and informal youth organizations, after school activities, etc. This would give insight into how constraints operate in different settings.
3. Consider community-wide fields on which PA could undertaken, creating PA in multiple, bounded locations for practice, e.g. in a neighborhood work in schools, youth organizations, churches, community education, government, and non-governmental programs, etc.
4. Take on structural constraints at levels beyond the site– with school districts, state curricula, schools of education, etc. This entails getting school districts to devote monetary / time / curricular resources to make PA happen.
5. Develop a curricular model that can be implemented within “regular” classrooms.

Coaching:

To counter the anxiety of “not knowing what to do,” we recommend that site teams be clearer about the expectations and likely difficulties of the coaching role. We further recommend that coach orientation / training / on-going supervision and support be conceived in terms an individual coach's personal and skill developments over the year.

II. INTRODUCTION / WHAT IS THIS REPORT?

This is draft reports what was learned during the second year of an on-going evaluation of Public Achievement. This year we visited sites in Greater Kansas City, Minnesota, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. We did in-depth interviews with youth (50), coaches (90), principals (7), site coordinators (7), coach coordinators (4), and Public Achievement staff (3), as well as observing Public Achievement in action.

We asked everyone to reflect on “how Public Achievement is working at their site” and what PA means to them in their lives, at school, at home, in the community, etc. Our goal was to listen— to the stories, accounts, and descriptions of Public Achievement. From these talks, we looked for patterns, themes, and issues, within and across sites, and it is some of these we include.

This report is not exhaustive of what is going on at all sites, we did not visit all sites. Everything is place, time, and person bound, and we don’t generalize to all of PA. Rather, our goal is to report what we saw and heard, not judge, conclude, or create expectations for “success” or “failure.” This report is intended to invite conversations on the deeper purposes and meanings of PA so as to make it stronger. The findings and recommendations are for sites to use as they wish in deciding on practical goals and strategies within the real constraints of their site. Sites may also want to consider how the findings suggest strategies to challenge these constraints. In short, our hope is that this report will be useful to you as you go about planning and carrying out PA in the coming year.

III. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: MAJOR ROLES

There are many roles in Public Achievement– youth team member, coach, coach coordinator, site coordinator and the like. These roles are constituted by expectations (how the role should be carried out), practices (how this role is carried out), the particular context of the work (site), the structural position of the role within the site, and the personality of the individual taking on the role.

A. COACHES

Last year we developed the grounded hypothesis that PA “works” for young people in part because of the process in which coaches and team members learn **how** to work with each other as a “group.” This year we examined this process from the perspective of the coach, looking at all elements of the coaching experience: orientation, training, actual coaching, de-briefing, on-going supervision and support, and connections with university classes or organizations. We also included different “types” of coaches– teachers, post-secondary students, secondary students, and community members. We interviewed these coaches to learn what their experiences were like, how they made sense of them, and what these meant in the context of their lives. We also observed coaches in action.

Our talks with coaches told us that much of what we learned last year was right. First, coaching is a difficult role to carry out, but can be a meaningful and possibly transformative experience for the coach– whether positive or negative. We also heard again that many coaches say that their training and orientation did not prepare them well for working with young people. We learned this year that the coaches’ perception of inadequate training / orientation this could not be otherwise, as we show in finding #1 below.

FINDINGS:

1. **The coaches’ experience of “not knowing what to do” during the first weeks of coaching contributes powerfully to what makes Public Achievement “work” by creating the conditions for a “democratic” small group**
 - a. Almost all coaches characterized their initial experiences (weeks 1-8) in terms of “I didn’t know what I was doing,” “I didn’t know what I was supposed to be doing,” or “I didn’t know what this is about.” The different types of training and support at different sites did little to alter this experience of confusion and feelings of frustration.
 - b. These initial experiences of “not knowing what I am doing” are put up against

multiple and sometimes conflicting expectations (from Coach Coordinator, “greenbook,” site, and themselves). This creates a tension in which coaches feel like they are “failing” or never measuring up to some ideal, thus feeding the frustration.

- c. One result at this early stage is a tension between the actual work and the coach’s conclusion that s/he was poorly prepared, hence, the criticisms that coach training is inadequate.
- d. What do coaches do? Many looked to their coach coordinator or site coordinator. For some, this was expressed as not being helpful at resolving the tension and dealing with the feelings. So coaches then looked to each other. This helped, a new sub-culture of support was found in expressing and sharing ideas, feelings, frustrations, etc. At many sites, these talks took place in informal settings, like riding to and from Public Achievement.

IN SPITE OF THIS, SOMETHING HAPPENS:

- e. Many coaches told us that things started to click at around the 5-8 week mark, the group was learning how to work together. This is expected according to the literature on group theory. It is an expected response because coaches are “forced” to resolve the above tension by going to the group and saying, in effect, “how can we together make this PA work?” (Not all coaches reported this experience. Those who were authoritarian were less likely to be open to the process of learning how to work together. Those blamed their team members for their bad experiences also continued to struggle).
- f. Combined with our findings from last year, **this strengthens our hypothesis that it is the co-creative process in which kids and coaches must learn to work together that is one of the processes that makes PA “work.”** In other words, because coaches do not know what they are doing, they must negotiate with their group how they are going to work together, and this creates the conditions for a “democratic” small group. This highlights a distinction between *knowing* and *doing*, where “academic” knowledge about something does not necessarily help someone do public work with kids. Through time and with reflection, cognitive knowledge and practice are combined into a *praxis* of coaching.

2. **Absence of meaningful reflection.**

Again, there was the lack of guided reflection with fellow coaches and with youth. This “showed itself” to us in a new way: generally coaches were not reflective in their accounts of their coaching experiences, that is, they did not seem able to talk about self in ways which showed reflection on the connections between self, role, and situation. This absence of reflection with coaches is

mirrored by an absence of guided reflection by coaches with youth. Coaches thus lost an opportunity to develop as coaches and as persons, thus diminishing the possibility of PA.

3. The negative effects of changing coaches mid-year

- a. At many sites, there was a turn-over of coaches at the semester's end. Youth didn't like this, especially when their coaches did not tell them about it in advance.
- b. At several sites, there was high coach turn-over throughout the year, and this has profound negative consequences for team members. Team members told us how difficult it was to have a coach miss a single session, much less having to deal with three to four coaches during the year.

CONCLUSIONS:

There are three elements to coaching:

1. Who the individual coach is.
2. What the group is like, its individual members and the dynamics between and among them.
3. The ethos and practices of Public Achievement.

These three elements come together to constitute how a coach and group work together. Typically training has been focused on the teaching the ethos of PA (public work), a general organization of work (starting where the kids are, explore issues, research, take action, evaluate), and some techniques (power mapping). This training is usually generalized to all coaches in a particular cohort.

In general, this current orientation / training / on-going support structure provides coaches with the basic orientation and tools **to learn "on the job" how to work** democratically with their youth groups, but it is not necessarily attentive to an individual coach's development over time.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Coach development should be conceived in terms of an individual coach's personal and skill developments over the year** (yet most coaches work only one year, see Rec. #7).
2. **Refine orientation / training:**
 - a. We recommend that site teams be clearer in setting the tone about the coach's role, its expectations, and likely typical difficulties. A possible conversation could be:

“Coaching is difficult. It is difficult because you will experience moments in which you believe *you do not know what you are doing*. This is typical, expected, and o.k., and no amount of training can prepare you to prevent this. You are invited to take a risk of being open to the process of **learning how** to work with your group. The orientation, training, and debriefings are designed to help you through this process, but cannot change the expected tensions, or account for the unexpected moments which make up the role.”
 - b. Expand youth's role in training of PA coaches.
3. **Change the expectation that there is one “right way” to coach PA within the basic PA structure.** We have seen how each coach does PA somewhat differently and coaches should be aware of this. One approach could be to present series of coaching narratives which tell about different coaching experiences.
4. **Refine support structure.** Set up the observation / de-brief / reflection structure so that the focus is on improving practices / individual coach development over the course of the year.
5. **Recognize publicly and show in practice that reflection / meaning making throughout all levels is an integral element of Public Achievement.** Collect and use existing examples of coach coordinators engage in high level reflection with their coaches thus contributing to coach development. We saw excellent examples of reflection from the coach coordinators for Wyandotte County Americorps and Milwaukee.

6. **Make every effort to secure coaching commitments for the school year.** See appendix (?) for draft of coach commitment form.

6. **Expand coach base to include diverse members of local community– business, seniors, Americorps members, etc.** Diversity in coaches by age, gender, race, ethnicity, class should be a PA goal.

7. **Encourage multi-year coaching** in part by finding coach sources which can accommodate this goal. At Dakota Meadows, Joe Kunkel’s mentor coaches are a good use of multi-year coaches.

B. COACH COORDINATORS

Coach coordinators are critical to the recruitment, training, and on-going support of coaches and coaching. All the coach coordinators we visited were consciously and intentionally working to improve how they work with coaches and the coaches' experiences in Public Achievement. Their hard work was usually done in addition to full time, regular responsibilities of being a professor, program coordinator, teacher, etc.

FINDINGS

1. **There are different styles, methods, and thematic emphases for the orientation, training, and on-going support of coaches across sites.** These differences often reflect the disciplinary background of the coordinator (political science, education, social work, etc.) and/or a broader philosophy of working with youth. These differences impact how coaching is carried out with youth.
 - a. *Orientation / Training:* This ranges from a minimal introduction to PA (a few hours) to intensive multiple sessions over a number of weeks. Some use a curricular model, with readings targeting skill and concept development, while others focus on “learning by doing” along with reflection. Most use a combination of both
 - b. *De-briefing:* many, but not all, coaches de-brief after PA. Site-based teachers who are coaching rarely de-brief. Coaches tell us that de-briefings are effective in venting or immediate problem-solving, but wish they were more meaningful for skill and personal development.
 - c. *Observing / supervising / on-going support:* different coach coordinators had different styles and methods in how they try to help coaches through observation, de-briefing, one-on-one support, and written work. Some of these (especially tensions between supervision and “observation”) were a source of confusion and/or tension for coaches.
 - d. *Thematic of emphases:* different coach coordinators emphasize different aspects of Public Achievement to their coaches– concepts, projects, individual coach development, discipline, getting to know kids, etc. This has profound effects in how coaches go about their work with youth, the content of reflection, and the coach’s satisfaction. This orientation can be named by coordinator, coach, and young person.
2. **There is little evidence of systematic sharing of best practices for coach coordinators across sites.** We saw many examples of excellent practices, but these seem to be localized at specific sites.

- 3. There are few opportunities for coach coordinators to be trained for this role.**
- 4. Most coach pools are new each year and therefore have to be trained every year.**
 - a. A tremendous amount of practice wisdom is lost each year, as well as expertise in working with new coaches.
 - b. Considerable time, effort, and resources are expended each year recruiting and training coaches.
 - c. The institutional memory is located with the coach coordinator.
- 5. As “outsiders” at sites, coach coordinators are structurally marginal, and thus limited in their ability to bring about site changes in what they see as crucial to a flourishing PA. This can be a source of frustration for coach coordinators.**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. The position of coach coordinator should be located within regional technical assistance and accountability structures .**
- 2. Different orientations to coach recruitment, training, and supervision should be put into conversation with each other with the aim of creating models across sites to try and evaluate.**
- 3. A family of “coaching styles” and a family of models for the orientation/ training should be developed out of these conversations.**
- 4. Drawing on recommendations two and three, regional staff should provide technical assistance to help coach coordinators put together an appropriate training / orientation / on-going supervision “package” for their site / coach pools.**
- 5. Coach coordinators should be sensitized how and encouraged to ask for consultation / technical assistance from a wide variety of PA and non-PA sources.**
- 6. More opportunities for training, inter-site work, and on-going support should be made available to coach coordinators.**

C. SITE COORDINATOR

We learned last year that the site coordinator is a most critical role for making PA work

at a particular site. We also learned how difficult this role is to carry out, given the structural constraints at sites.

FINDINGS:

1. Site coordinators are dedicated

Site coordinators work very hard. Their willingness to carry on in spite of real everyday frustrations shows their dedication. Why do they do it? Because, they say, “PA has an impact on the kids at my school.”

2. Structural constraints / situational frustrations of the role.

The structural constraints we were told about were the “classics.” Typically, site coordination is done **in addition to** full time responsibilities of teacher, counselor, or administrator. The biggest constraint is **time** to do the necessary work for the everyday operation of PA, which as we know, usually means significant time to “fight fires,” e.g. absentee coaches, problems with space, scheduling, “unruly” students, other bureaucratic demands, etc. This leaves very little time to integrate PA into the “culture” of a school / site, improve practice, attend trainings, events, conferences, etc. Some site coordinators are further constrained by such things as limits on their authority within the school, very limited financial resources, space to work, phone, ability to leave the building, computer, and necessary relationships that make PA workable within the school. There only a few sites where PA is someone’s primary responsibility, and they do not have faculty status.

3. Frustrations come with the job

Individuals in this role typically chose (or were chosen) to do PA because of their dedication to young people, their dedication to innovative efforts, their skills, and their endurance. They are the folks who already have lots to do— many different school initiatives and tasks in addition to PA. They are caught! Their interest and desire crashes into “not enough time,” no money, etc. A typical refrain we heard this year was “There are a lot of things I would like to do to make PA better, but I don’t have time.” This frustration is compounded by the fact it is difficult at many sites to involve more school and community people in PA. The job is tough because of these constraints, and it is tough in ways which, while your doing it, don’t seem easy to manage and overcome. Frustration is a result, with burn-out a real possibility.

4. **Because they spend time in dealing with “problems,” site coordinators often do not see the good things that they help bring about.**

When asked to assess the site, site coordinators tend underestimate the amount and quality of PA work going on. It takes an outsider to see all of this. This is especially true for site coordinators who have two or more years of experience who may take for granted that Public Achievement works.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Resources should be secured from internal school, PA, or external sources so that site coordinators are given sufficient time to do the necessary work.**

This could take the form of revising job descriptions, paying for substitutes, hiring new personnel, using volunteers, or dedicating an administrative fiscal augmentation, etc.

2. **More opportunities for training, inter-site work, and on-going support should be made available to site coordinators, including tuition benefits.**

During the year, site coordinators typically do not have time to attend training sessions or work with other sites. Funds could facilitate this. The quarterly meetings of site teams in Greater Kansas City PA are a good step towards this. Site coordinators should be paid to attend summer conferences and trainings when they are typically “off-duty.”

D. SITE TEAM (Site Coordinator + Coach Coordinator + others = Site Team)

Here too, the site team is a title, a set of role expectations and responsibilities, a structural position, and the individuals who together to carry the work out at a particular site. But more, a site team is the ideal in which there are regular meetings for joint planning, monitoring, “fixing,” evaluating. That is “team” means working together.

FINDINGS:

1. Site teams work hard

We have been struck by the dedication of the site teams in their efforts to sustain and improve Public Achievement. Most were using work plans developed at the 2000 National Conference at Koinonia or elsewhere. They all confronted the difficulties and challenges of doing PA in schools with more or less complex bureaucratic structures, competing goals, shifting personnel assignments, and the like.

2. The work is typically carried out by relatively few people at a site.

- a. Typically, only one or two people make PA happen at a site. Most of the work is carried out by they site coordinator and coach coordinator with more or less involved support from the principal, and sometimes involvement of other teachers, and rarely students or coaches.
- b. Some sites have tried to build “deeper bull pens” with some varying degrees of success. Information on how to do this has not been made available to the PA network.
- c. Because the role of Coach Coordinator is typically filled by someone “outside” school, this person has relatively little power to make direct contributions to site.

3. There are often “problems” communicating between members of the site team.

A constant theme we heard this year was that site coordinators wanted improved communication with coach coordinators / coach pools. We have seen good models and practices for doing this, and these should be made available throughout the network.

CONCLUSIONS:

Many sites have site teams, but at many sites you have people working within their individual silos. Because the “team-ness” of site teams is not developed, their work becomes problem solving, rather than deeper engagement level of school as a site. As a result, the synaptic connections between PA and something larger are often missing.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **We recommend that site teams broaden who is on the team and what various roles do (we are aware of the difficulties in “freeing” additional people within schools). Every effort should be made to get youth, coaches, community members, and the like on site teams.**

2. **We recommend that more opportunities be made available for site teams to work together with consultation from PA regional staff.**

E. YOUTH

Although not a focus of this year's evaluation, the youth we interviewed and observed again taught us how Public Achievement can be a profound experience. For many, Public Achievement represents a place and time of possibility and promise, where they can see themselves and the world differently.

In addition to the findings from last year we would add:

- a. Youth told us about the importance of doing projects or taking action. They told us that it did not matter how big or public a project is, as long as it makes a difference. For these team members this project or action becomes an important reference point to make sense of other elements of PA.
- b. Some team members understood their PA experience in terms of teaching adult coaches.
- c. Some team members had difficult times working in schools where they perceived that PA was not respected by teachers. They told us that their teachers saw PA as not school work or it takes away from school work.
- d. Many youth expressed real frustration with a change in coaches during the year. Some said that they would take out their frustrations on the new coaches.
- e. Again, at many sites there is little evidence of meaningful reflection with team members. Team members who have engaged in guided reflection are better able to articulate lessons learned in PA, better able to apply these learnings to other domains of life, and are able to think deeper about PA.
- f. Without reflection, multi-year PA becomes succession of different projects, not deepened learning over time.
- g. We heard youth use phrases from the video used to describe their PA experiences.

IV. FINDINGS: SITES– “PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER”

All the elements of Public Achievement– various roles doing activities in specific places– come together to make up a site. Every site we visited carries on a somewhat different PA and every team at every site is likewise somewhat different. Given the ethos of PA this could not be otherwise.

In trying to make PA better at a site, it is crucial to distinguish between structural constraints, roles, the individuals taking on these roles, and emergent situational realities. In this section we want to make visible some of the structural and programmatic realities that challenge, channel, or deflect or limit the implementation, sustenance, and improvement of Public Achievement.

1. **Time is the most important structural constraint.**
 - a. ***Time to do basic PA:*** Most sites dedicate the bare minimum amount of time for basic weekly PA programming, this makes it difficult to do any additional work to deepen or improve PA.
 - b. ***PA is added in addition to “regular” job responsibilities of personnel at the site:*** We heard a constant refrain from site coordinators that “There are a lot of things I would like to do to make PA better, but I don’t have time.”
 - c. ***It is difficult to “find time” to involve more people at a site:*** Many faculty and staff are not involved in PA because they are doing their regular jobs. It is difficult to find time involve more people.
 - d. ***Time beyond PA:*** Public Achievement often asks participants to do additional things in addition to running PA, e.g. meetings, conferences, training / kid events, site visits, transforming school, etc. Often these additional activities are requested at the last minute which is an additional source of frustration.
 - e. ***There is a one-year cycle of coaching:*** The yearly work of having to recruit, orient and train coaches takes significant time.
2. **Non-time Structural realities / barriers in doing Public Achievement within schools:**
 - a. ***Space:*** Finding space for groups to meet is a major barrier in PA, and groups are often working in sub-optimal conditions, e.g. in hallways, closets, 2-3 groups in a classroom, etc.
 - b. ***Other priorities:*** PA must compete with different school priorities. PA is often

seen as “secondary” to school, district, or state “performance mandates.” PA also competes with other extra or co-curricular programs.

- c. **Connections to curriculum:** There are few systematic links between PA and the curriculum of a particular school, or at the district or state levels. There are few connections between PA and administrative levels beyond the school building, e.g. school districts, state departments of education, curriculum experts, professional associations, and the like.
- d. **As an outside initiative:** Public Achievement encounters difficulties in being an “outside” initiative that brings outsiders into school. This may lead some “insiders” to blame PA for problems and resent it for successes. In addition, school staff have commented that there is an anti-teacher tone to PA meetings, conferences, etc. This can have further marginalize PA as “outsider.”
- e. **Communication / visibility:** within sites is difficult. Site teams often struggle to make PA visible within a school and encounter difficulties communicating with and among its faculty / staff, parents, and non-PA students.
- f. **Integration:** Integrating PA into school / organization is difficult. Many site coordinators expressed frustration in not being able to better integrate PA into classroom instruction, school decision-making processes, or more broadly, into the “culture” of the school. Because it is difficult to integrate PA into a school / organization, it is often more like than an enrichment program than a “natural” part of the school.
- g. **Measuring progress:** Most sites report incremental “progress” over the course of a number of years (years two - four). It is hard to make “progress” and to cumulate improvements over time. Often this progress is “limited” to improving the weekly PA work, not integrating PA into the “culture” of the school; and this, for many, is seen as not measuring up to the expectations of PA.
- h. **PA becomes taken for granted:** As sites become more experienced, Public Achievement may become “taken for granted.” The “newness” or “difference” that is Public Achievement wears off after several years. This “taken for grantedness” has the effect of making invisible many of the good things at sites. This indicates, however, a degree of institutionalization.
- g. **Difficulties involving additional teachers in Public Achievement**
- X teachers have difficulty “seeing” PA, much less becoming involved, because they often must be in their classrooms.
- X Many teachers “see” PA in terms of “kids acting up” during PA time, requests made by site coordinators to pull kids out of class, kids using PA as an excuse to get out of class work, and/or as a disruption to their regular work.

- X Teachers do not know coaches
- X At many schools, teachers are not included in PA work– therefore, positive work is credited to outsiders.

3. Programmatic realities / barriers

- a. **Relationship between SC and CC:** Public Achievement is built on the relationships of site coordinators and coach coordinators. These relationships continue over time, typically because of individual commitments and personal connections. There are profound consequences for PA when these relationships founder. At many sites, these relationships are not formalized in compacts / memoranda of understanding. The compact developed by GKCPA and the Heartland region are good steps in this direction.
- b. **Communication:** There are often problems with communication between sites and coach pools. The weekly write-ups by coaches at Andersen Elementary in Minneapolis has helped on this.
- c. **Problems with scheduling:** A major issue between coach pools and sites is “scheduling” and the necessary logistical work to make sure sites and coach pools can work together. This not only requires a great deal of work, but is a tenuous institutional arrangement.
- d. **Difficulties in recruiting, training “new” coaches every year:** Coaches are generally new each year, tremendous time, effort, and resources are dedicated to recruiting and training.
- e. **Distance:** Many people who work on PA have difficulties (cannot leave the building) traveling to meetings, etc.

4. General structural realities / barriers of schools:

- a. **Cultural barriers:** There are often cultural barriers within schools, typically there is an absence of any sort of culture supporting youth involvement
- b. **Time cycles at schools:** Many schools run on three year cycles. Grants, tenure, programming, assistant principal turn-over, and review. Public Achievement is implicated in this cycle, and may be one of the reasons that sites find it difficult to sustain and deepen over time.
- c. **How teachers roles are organized creates barriers to PA:** Teachers often work in isolation of each other and it is difficult to contact or meet with teachers.
- d. **Expertise in schools:** is connected to academic discipline and position.
- e. **Barriers to parental involvement:** Similar to any non-sports program, Public Achievement encounters barriers in trying to involve parents. The consequence is that

there is little reinforcement of PA at home and that it is difficult to built a constituency around PA.

- f. ***School rules, policies, or regulations:*** can create barriers to working within a school building, community work.

CONCLUSIONS:

It is extremely difficult to sustain, much less deepen Public Achievement in schools over time (years two and beyond). There is an expectation in Public Achievement to make it a part of the “culture” of a school. Most site teams see this, and recognize that for PA to reach its potential, there need to be opportunities for public work and leadership beyond PA. However, **PA does not provide an explicit, rich, and proven model for school change.** The results are frustration and possible burn-out over time.

RECOMMENDATIONS AT THE PRACTICE LEVEL:

1. **We recommend that site teams and Public Achievement staff make an inventory of the structural constraints that impact Public Achievement at their site.**

Technical assistance should be provided to help site teams determine which structural constraints are reasonable, possible, and practicable to take on.

2. **Site teams should take structural barriers into account in their planning, implementation and evaluation.**
3. **A database of strategies to deal with structural barriers should be developed and made available throughout the PA network.**

4. **Resources should be secured from internal school, PA, or external sources so that site coordinators are given sufficient time to do the necessary work of PA.**

This could take the form of revising job descriptions, paying for substitutes, hiring new personnel, using volunteers, or dedicating an administrative fiscal augmentation, etc.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

The structural realities of working within schools create important implications at the policy level. We suggest possible policy responses to address this issue. Each response

has real consequences to what PA is, how it is practiced, and how technical assistance, training, and consultation are organized at the national and local levels. Of course, none of these policy options is exclusive of the others, but any decision to pursue a particular should include ways to evaluate its effectiveness. Possible policy options include:

1. Continue to refine / professionalize practices as currently practiced in sites. This calls for a discussion about what can and should be expected for PA at each individual site. These discussions should take into account the unique contexts of each site, as well as a site's vision for doing PA. Different sites do PA for different reasons, and that is fine, but this does impact the goals and expectations for PA at a site.
2. Develop sites in addition to and in complement with schools, including formal and informal youth organizations, after school activities, etc. This would give insight into how constraints operate in different settings.
3. Consider community-wide fields on which PA could undertaken, creating PA in multiple, bounded locations for practice, e.g. in a neighborhood work in schools, youth organizations, churches, community education, government, and non-governmental programs, etc.
4. Take on structural constraints at levels beyond the site, that is with school districts, state curricula, schools of education, etc. This entails getting school districts to devote monetary / time / curricular resources to make PA happen.
5. Develop a curricular model that can be implemented within "regular" classrooms.

V. SUPPORTING SITES: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE / CONSULTATION

Technical assistance can take many forms, the most evident being regional or national staff assisting sites. However, there are other sources of technical assistance within the site, across the PA network, and outside of both.

Technical assistance and consultation is the intentional use of another's expertise to enhance one's own work. For PA, there is a wide variety of expertise which could be drawn upon managing both the on-going effort, as well as unique situations. Most crucial is finding the appropriate expertise at the appropriate time. Obviously, such expertise might be at the site (including youth), in the community, at other PA sites, national regional offices, other similar youth initiatives, etc. Such knowing when one needs such assistance, how to frame the request, who to ask, and the like are all skills which can be taught and learned.

FINDINGS:

1. **It is unclear what is the wide range of formal and informal TA within and across sites .** This means both internal technical expertise (teachers, youth, parents) and external (PA staff, PA network, and other youth initiatives with similar goals and interests)
2. **There is minimal on-going inter-site consultation.** Kansas City's three site team meetings are a excellent start in this direction.
3. **Youth, typically are neither seen nor called upon as experts who can do technical assistance / consultation.**
4. **It is unclear whether needs assessments have been made by site teams as what types of expertise, staff, administrative, they want to have available.**
5. **It is unclear whether PA site teams know when and how to call for technical assistance.**
6. **PA rarely looks to other civic, educational, or service-learning organizations for technical assistance or consultation.**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **Sites should conduct a needs assessment to determine which kind of technical assistance they need.**
2. **Sites should recognize and make opportunities for young people to deliver technical assistance.** This includes the training of coaches and teachers.
3. **Regional / national staff should develop a database of what kinds of expertise and technical assistance are available**
4. **PA should continue with its sustained effort to integrate technical assistance into the planning and evaluation process.**
5. **More opportunities should be made for sites to work collaboratively.**