



PASE PROFILE

Janet Kelley

Current Title

Principal, Kelley Collaborative

Contribution to PASE

Founding Executive Director



Over the next year, as PASE celebrates its 20th anniversary, we will be profiling a few of the many individuals and organizations who have made extraordinary contributions to our work together. Here is the third profile. To read the other profiles, visit www.pasesetter.org.

By 1993, the need for a central, network-based organization to help build, support, and strengthen afterschool programs was well established. And the conceptual framework for such an organization was already in place.

The daunting task of turning a sound concept into a thriving institution fell to PASE's Founding Steering Committee, a small group of practitioners, agency leaders, and funders. Every member of that original group knew that the challenges confronting them were formidable. But for some members, like Steering Committee Co-Chair Janet Kelley, the challenges were also personal.

"At the time, I was the executive director of a community-based organization that ran a large afterschool program," says Kelley. "We were struggling to meet the multiple, diverse, critical needs of our kids with insufficient funding, limited organizational capacity, and few opportunities for professional development. Worst of all, we were operating in isolation. Best practices? Clearly identified standards or outcomes? Full access to outside expertise? Those things didn't exist for us back then. But as a member of the Steering Committee, I began to see how they could be developed through PASE. And as head of a struggling community-based organization, I knew firsthand how deeply and urgently PASE was needed."

Spurred by this same sense of urgency, the Steering Committee set out to quickly learn everything they could about afterschool programs in New York City. At that time there was no aggregate information about the field. So the committee began to assemble a database of afterschool organizations. They conducted a needs assessment of those organizations. And they held the first PASE conference.

"At that conference, we got to know a whole lot about a whole lot of groups in a brief time," says Kelley. "We learned who's doing what. Who has experience or expertise in which areas. It also gave the groups an opportunity to participate more fully in this evolving PASE network—to let us know not only what they needed but also how they might help us and help one another."



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“At the same time that all of this was going on, we were trying to decide whether to formally incorporate as a nonprofit. There was no other organization doing this vitally necessary work. And we had begun to realize that we were really good at doing it.”

“From the beginning we sought to identify and employ the individual strengths of our members in service of the field as a whole. We cultivated leaders...They were actually creating the field by assuming leadership roles within it.”

In 1998, PASE achieved 501(c)3 status. Janet Kelley was asked by the Steering Committee to become the founding executive director of the fledgling nonprofit, which initially had only one other staff member.

“PASE has always worked with a very small staff in relation to the number, size, and scope of the projects we took on. We understood that our power was in our structure as a network. From the beginning we sought to identify and employ the individual strengths of our members in service of the field as a whole. We cultivated leaders. We would organize small groups, like the program council, and ask its members to bring in ideas, find out what kind of support or resources were needed. Those small groups became learning communities. Their members began to feel that they were part of something larger. They were actually creating the field by assuming leadership roles within it.”

During the nine years when Kelley was executive director, PASE developed and implemented scores of innovative programs; brought hundreds of afterschool organizations into its network; trained thousands of practitioners; and created a host of studies, evaluations, guides, databases, and publications as resources for the afterschool field.

“When I look back on my time with PASE, I realize that I’d come full circle,” says Kelley. “I started out with questions that arose directly from my work as head of an afterschool agency: Where can we get the training and professional development we need? How can we meet the many needs of the children we serve? And at bottom, I’d sometimes ask myself, is there anyone who truly cares about all these people who

care for our children in afterschool? Of course, the answer to all those questions is PASE. We created the answer ourselves.”

PASE Profiles written by Kitty Barnes