



NEWS RELEASE  
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CONTACT: Gretchen Wright  
202/371-1999

## **New White Paper Highlights Research on Afterschool Best Practices; Draws Links to Exemplary Programs Across the Nation**

Washington, DC — Reams of research over the past 20 years have amply demonstrated the value of afterschool programs for children, parents, families, schools and communities. That thorough record of achievement has given rise to a second wave of research in recent years, one focused on identifying the particular elements of afterschool programs that drive success. A new white paper from the Afterschool Alliance, sponsored by the Walton Family Foundation to help inform their grant making in the Mississippi River Delta region, pulls together the various strands of this ongoing research, connecting researchers' findings about best afterschool practices with programs now in the field.

["Taking a Deeper Dive into Afterschool: Positive Outcomes and Promising Practices,"](#) covers 17 separate studies of more than a dozen programs, some local, some statewide, some national. Taken together, the white paper says, the research demonstrates the effectiveness of afterschool programs in a number of key areas, including:

- **School engagement**, including attendance and likelihood of staying in school;
- **Student behavior**, including decreased participation in at-risk behaviors, such as criminal activity, gang involvement, drug and alcohol use, or sexual activity;
- **Academic performance**, including test scores, grades, graduation rates and college enrollment.

The weight of the research points to a number of important best practices that correlate with these and other positive outcomes for students in the programs. The white paper summarizes the best practices, including:

- **Intentional programming/strong program design**, which includes identifying and targeting specific goals and outcomes, providing variation in activities, using engaging programming to encourage regular attendance, and more;
- **Staff quality**, which includes staff experience, staff ability to connect positively with children, the program's professional development efforts, and more;
- **Effective partnerships** with schools, community organizations and families; and
- **Rigorous evaluations** that contribute to **ongoing program improvement**.

"Students, parents, educators, local leaders and others have seen the positive results of afterschool for some time now," said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. "Afterschool programs have matured to the point that research can now focus on what exactly makes programs successful. Knowing

that with some specificity helps us raise quality across the board. We still face the problem of having too few programs to meet the overwhelming demand for afterschool, but we owe it to the children we're already serving to make sure they get the most powerful experience afterschool can deliver."

The white paper goes on to highlight a number of programs that have put these best practices to work on behalf of their students. For example:

- *Community Partnerships.* **AfterZone**, a city-wide afterschool initiative in **Providence, Rhode Island**, works with public and private stakeholders, including community-based organizations, various city government departments and the school system, to oversee and manage afterschool sites.
- *Intentional Programming.* **Chicago's After School Matters** program offers a variety of hands-on activities to engage students, including apprenticeships for high school students interested in technology, the arts, sports and more.
- *School Partnerships.* The **Schools & Homes in Education (SHINE)** program in **rural Pennsylvania** collaborates with school-day teachers to align its programming with school-day lessons and to target resources to best support the needs of particular students. Program staff are in regular contact with classroom teachers and develop instructional plans for individual students.

The white paper is online at [www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Deeper\\_Dive\\_into\\_Afterschool.pdf](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Deeper_Dive_into_Afterschool.pdf).

*The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs. More information is available at [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).*