



NEWS RELEASE
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Bronx Afterschool Program Wins National Award from MetLife Foundation

Program is one of six nationwide recognized for innovation and excellence.

MetLife Foundation and the Afterschool Alliance today honored Learning through an Expanded Arts Program (LeAp 22) at the Jordon L. Mott School CIS 22 in the Bronx with an Afterschool Innovator Award, recognizing the program's success in providing multiple benefits for middle school students through a hands-on, arts-based approach to teaching the academic curriculum. The organization celebrated the award at a special event that was part of *Lights On Afterschool*, the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs. LeAp 22 also received \$5,000 to sustain its work.

"Middle school is a pivotal point in young people's development," said Dennis White, President and CEO of MetLife Foundation. "We are pleased to join the Afterschool Alliance in recognizing the LeAp Program, which is addressing the needs of middle school students and placing them on the path to success."

LeAp 22 is one of only six afterschool programs nationwide to be named a 2010 Afterschool Innovator. It was highlighted in an [Issue Brief](#) on how afterschool programs provide multiple benefits to middle school students, part of a series developed by the Afterschool Alliance with funding from MetLife Foundation, examining critical issues facing youth, schools and communities, and the role that afterschool programs play in addressing these issues. The briefs describe a variety of benefits that afterschool programs provide, including opportunities for community involvement; leadership development; pathways to higher education and careers; health and wellness; and science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) learning.

LeAP 22 is changing the lives of about 300 economically disadvantaged and culturally underserved middle school youth, providing afterschool arts-based instruction, community service activities, tutoring, and mentoring. The program uses all arts from photography and video to Capoeira, slam poetry and community action projects, as well as the written word, to engage students in creative pursuits, academic success and creative development. LeAp 22 builds students' art skills; increases their involvement and attendance in school; develops confidence and creativity; prevents violence in school and out; and helps students forge positive relationships with peers and adult role models.

"It's a great honor to be recognized by MetLife Foundation and the Afterschool Alliance for our work with youth and pre-teens," said Ila Lane Gross, Executive Director of LeAp. "We use visual arts, music, dance, theater arts and the written word to engage our students in creative pursuits, academic learning, violence prevention and community service. Our program has increased the students in-school attendance and significantly improved their academic achievement."

The *Lights On Afterschool* event included a student performance with the theme “My Block” that included violin, hip hop, martial arts, sports, and slam poetry, as well as music by the Mighty Marching Tigers Band and student video, art and photography exhibits.

Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, *Lights On Afterschool* is the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs. The Bronx event is one of more than 7,500 being held across the country at which children, parents, community leaders, educators and others come together to urge leaders to increase support for the afterschool programs that children and families need. The events also give youth a chance to showcase the skills they learn and talents they develop at their afterschool programs, and send the message that millions more kids need quality afterschool programs.

“Afterschool programs pick up where the school day leaves off,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “They provide children with unique opportunities to broaden their horizons and receive the support, experiences, and exposure they need to achieve success. The Afterschool Innovator Awards honor programs that have developed and are using promising practices to help children and youth excel.”

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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.

MetLife Foundation was established in 1976 by MetLife to carry on its longstanding tradition of corporate contributions and community involvement. In youth development, MetLife Foundation funds initiatives that promote mentoring and provide safe places and constructive activities for young people, particularly during out-of-school time. For more information, visit www.metlife.org.