



News Release

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Contact: [Lisa Lederer](#)

Afterschool Alliance Commends National Academies Study on Out-of-School Time Programs for Providing Valuable Assessment, Direction

Released Today, New Study Notes Myriad Benefits from Afterschool Programs

Washington, DC – The Afterschool Alliance welcomed a study released today by the esteemed National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, [“The Future of Youth Development: Building Systems and Strengthening Programs.”](#) The consensus study on learning and development of K-12 low-income youth in out-of-school time (OST) settings identifies five reasons OST programs are important: they play a crucial role in positive child and youth development; they serve as a bridge between school, home, and the community; they offer safe, structured environments; they provide a chance to engage in meaningful activities, build relationships, and develop life skills; and they support working parents and families.

It examines evidence on the effectiveness and outcomes of OST programs for promoting learning, development, and wellbeing; what approaches are linked to positive effects; how policies and regulations for OST programs can be improved; and more. “The Future of Youth Development” also looks at the OST workforce, demand for programs, and student participation. It concludes that OST programs provide a responsive place for the social and emotional development of children and youth, provided they are well designed and offer high-quality experiences that intentionally support these areas; and that programs can improve test scores and grades but vary in their ability to do so based on access to resources, including their ability to engage well-trained staff.

“The afterschool field has a deep commitment to continuous improvement so we can do even more for the children, youth, and families our programs serve,” said Jodi Grant, executive director of the Afterschool Alliance. “We are grateful for this study, and the Committee that developed it, because it identifies strategies that will strengthen our work and ensure programs can do even more to support children, youth, and families. We hope public and private funders at the national, state, and local levels will do their part to provide the necessary funding so that programs can provide high quality opportunities for more children and families.”

The recommendations in the National Academies study are centered around six goals:

- Support the funding stability of OST programs;
- Increase investment in intermediary organizations;
- Advance program quality efforts to foster enriching, safe, and supportive OST settings;
- Build stable, supportive environments and career pathways for youth development practitioners;

- Improve understanding of the landscape of OST programs and participation, OST staff development, program quality efforts, and OST systems; and
- Improve understanding of OST program effectiveness and outcomes.

“As a former Secretary of Education in Virginia, I know firsthand how valuable out-of-school time programs are in helping students succeed in school and preventing the harms that come when they are unsupervised in the afternoons,” said Gerard Robinson, Professor at the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy at the University of Virginia and a member of the Afterschool Alliance Board of Directors. “This new study from the esteemed National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine makes clear that these programs are a wise investment that deserve significantly more federal, state, and local financial support. I was proud to serve on the Committee that produced it and will work hard to ensure it gets the attention it deserves.”

Like Robinson, Afterschool Alliance Senior Vice President Jen Rinehart served on the National Academies Committee that researched and produced the study. “We are grateful to The Wallace Foundation for sponsoring this study, and to the National Academies and every member of the Committee for nearly two years of hard work,” Rinehart said. “The afterschool community will use it as a roadmap as we work to become even more effective in the months and years ahead.”

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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.