



NEWS RELEASE  
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## **Providence Afterschool Program Wins National Award for Outstanding Programming for Middle School Students**

### ***AS220 Youth Recognized for Meeting the Needs of At-Risk Youth***

The Afterschool Alliance today honored AS220 Youth in Providence with the 2014 MetLife Foundation Afterschool Innovator Award. The award, sponsored by MetLife Foundation, recognizes the program's success in providing arts education, mentorship and meeting the needs of at-risk middle school students. The award was presented at the "Breakfast of Champions," a gala event in Washington, D.C. featuring Members of Congress and national Afterschool Alliance champions.

AS220 Youth was one of only five afterschool programs in the country recognized for using innovative approaches to help middle school students succeed in the programs, school and life. The Afterschool Innovator Award includes \$10,000 for AS220 Youth to expand its work. Education Director Gianna Rodriguez and students Daphne Abreu (eighth grade) and Indira Miller (12<sup>th</sup> grade) accepted the award on behalf of the program.

"The middle school years are critical years for a child's development," said Dennis White, president and CEO of MetLife Foundation. "Afterschool programs can play a central role in helping middle school students develop confidence and life skills that will help them succeed. We are honored to join the Afterschool Alliance in recognizing AS220 Youth for its outstanding work keeping middle school children safe and supported after school."

AS220 Youth offers free arts courses in such areas as game design, photography, drawing, painting, mixed-media, writing and web development across three sites: a state juvenile detention center, an alternative middle school for students at-risk of dropping out of school, and a Youth Studio. The program is open year-round, six days a week and uses digital badges, student portfolios and skill sheets to document and track youth progress. Each student in the program works with a mentor and receives counseling to help with things like teen parenthood and gang involvement. An evaluation revealed that 93 percent of the students who participated in the program completed high school or their GED.

"AS220 Youth helps to engage youth who have become disconnected and are in danger of dropping out of middle school," said Rodriguez. "Students come to the Youth Studio after taking classes at the alternative middle school we partner with, the Urban Collaborative Accelerated Program. They can then sign up for a Studio Membership, which requires regular participation and involves progressive skill development. We see that the students in this program form bonds with instructors and when youth are able to bond with positive adult role models in middle

schools they are more likely to stay connected, and out of trouble, in high school. We're proud of our success and delighted to have that success recognized by MetLife Foundation and the Afterschool Alliance.”

AS220 Youth is featured in an [Issue Brief](#) on the Afterschool Alliance's website on how afterschool programs benefit middle school students. The Afterschool Alliance's Issue Brief series examines the role of afterschool programs in addressing a variety of contemporary issues facing youth, schools and communities.

“Afterschool programs do so much for students – helping them discover new talents, develop new skills, and have new experiences – all in social environments that help those students feel safe and supported,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “There is great potential in these programs to make an important and lasting difference in lives of middle school students who participate in them. We are pleased to work with MetLife Foundation to recognize and honor the programs that are excelling in this area.”

The “Breakfast of Champions” is part of the 13<sup>th</sup> annual *Afterschool for All Challenge*, sponsored by the Afterschool Alliance, which brings together hundreds of educators, parents, afterschool leaders and advocates from around the country for a series of events and meetings with Members of Congress. After the Breakfast, attendees headed to Capitol Hill for meetings with their senators and representatives to discuss the ways afterschool programs benefit children, families and communities.

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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](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).*