

Afterschool and Summer Learning Programs Are Essential for COVID-19 Recovery

When schools closed last March, afterschool programs were quick to adapt and maintain meaningful connections for children and families across the nation. These afterschool programs, along with summer learning and other out-of-school time providers, are nimble and connected. Out-of-school time programs have been a lifeline for many, providing childcare for working parents, academic tutoring, and social-emotional support; partnering with schools for hybrid learning; feeding hungry children; and linking families to local resources. **These programs have always been in high demand and at this critical time, they are essential.**

Providing Essential Services for Youth and Families

Out-of-school time programs stand ready to help children catch up on the learning they have lost and prepare to re-enter school and other activities after this period of isolation. Afterschool and summer programs:

- **Close the achievement gap** by providing students with more time for deeper learning and the extra help they need to recover from learning loss due to school closures and disrupted schedules.
- **Address student mental health** by connecting young people with caring mentors who are trained to help youth build healthy relationships and heal from trauma.
- **Ensure child safety** by partnering with schools to offer families a safe place for children to learn both during and beyond the school day, allowing parents to return to work or take time to seek employment.
- **Support nutrition** by feeding hungry children. The pandemic has exacerbated food insecurity and out-of-school time programs are seeing a significant increase in hungry children.



The 50 State Afterschool Network

Among parents of those enrolled,



78%

AGREE THAT AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS HELP THEM KEEP THEIR JOBS.¹

- **Promote physical activity** by encouraging physical health and wellness. Physical activity is especially important now as many students are in virtual or hybrid-learning and children have limited options for daily exercise.

Addressing Inequities

Access to out-of-school time programs is not always equitable. In the United States, for every child in an afterschool program, 3 are waiting to get in. School age children spend more than 80 percent of their waking hours learning outside of school, making afterschool and summer learning programs key to ensuring kids reach their full potential.

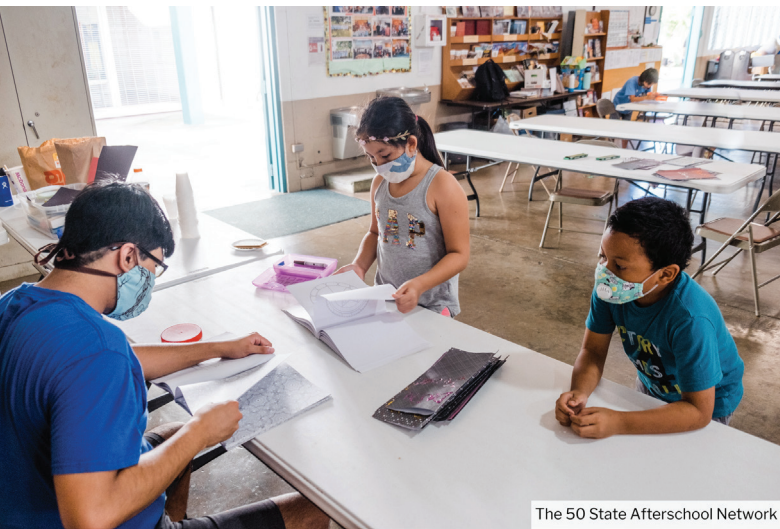
Out-of-school time programs are embedded in neighborhoods throughout the nation, uniquely positioning these programs to help families through this pandemic. These localized programs ensure young people have access to safe, quality programs that offer expanded learning opportunities and nutritious meals, and connect parents with health care, employment, and other resources.

1. Afterschool Alliance. (2020). America After 3PM.

A Critical Investment for Kids and Families

It is a critical time to invest in out-of-school time programs to meet the increased needs of our children and families. Federal stimulus funds can be used at the state and local level to support community-based non-profits, schools, local government, and other afterschool and summer learning providers in their efforts to support students and families. Moving forward, additional funding at the federal level will be needed as well to ensure local afterschool and summer learning programs are prepared to provide the social, emotional, and academic supports that students need for learning loss recovery.

Funds would be used to sustain and expand access for kids to be safe, academically supported, active, and fed during out-of-school time. Programs would be tailored to meet the unique needs of the communities and individual program funding would vary depending on the breadth and depth of program delivery. Funding priority would be given to programs in communities demonstrating the greatest need and fewest resources.



Federal and state COVID-19 relief funds are needed to:



Increase access to quality in-person programs that serve K-8 students.



Provide tutoring; social and emotional wellness services; enrichment activities; food distribution or other efforts to meet families' basic needs.



Address childhood hunger by providing meals and snacks for students.



Support additional staffing and professional development to respond to the increased needs of children and families, as well as necessary COVID-19 safety procedures and wellness checks.



Provide PPE and other safety supplies for students and staff.

This immediate relief funding for existing out-of-school time programs is just a start. Sustained investments are needed over time to ensure that youth across the country have access to quality out-of-school time programs.



The Afterschool Alliance is working to ensure that all children have access to affordable, quality afterschool programs.

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