

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT

A School Year Like No Other Demands More Resources & Partners: Afterschool & Community Partners Can Help

We are deeply concerned about the impact of social isolation on our children and youth. Children best connect, learn, and thrive when they are with peers and caring adults. Virtual learning is not possible or successful for *all* students. In order for our economy to recover, parents need to be able to work. Children with disabilities are impacted by social isolation and adjustment to virtual learning at a greater level than their non-disabled peers. As school districts plan for learning in the fall, they need to think beyond the school building and school staff to create a learning ecosystem that: follows public health safety protocols; keeps our children engaged and learning; and ensures that parents can work. We will need more space, more time, more educators, and more resources.

Schools need help, and afterschool programs and community-based organizations can answer that call for assistance. Afterschool, “out-of-school,” summer, expanded learning, and community-based programs (local providers, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs, 4-H, Girls Inc, parks and rec, museums, religious centers, etc.) operate at the nexus of schools, families, and communities. Programs offer opportunities for youth to develop strong, trusting relationships that research shows can help buffer the impact of adverse childhood experiences and trauma.^[1] Students who participate regularly in quality afterschool programs show improved engagement indicators such as attendance, behavior, and coursework.^[2] And programs provide spaces for deeper learning and for youth to use their talents, skills, and interests to innovate and thrive.^[3]

Community partners will be critical in helping schools address the inequities that have been exacerbated by COVID-19, providing academic, social, and emotional support to those students who need it most. During the pandemic, many afterschool and summer programs helped to lessen these gaps, continuing operations on-site and virtually and providing a foundation for a redesigned learning day. Programs served as bridges between families and schools, providing the cultural and linguistic connections to help families understand new school procedures and access necessary resources in the community including food, health, and economic supports. Faith-based organizations and institutions, public libraries, museums of all types, institutions of higher education, local businesses, and other community-based organizations can all offer creative supports and physical spaces to support the needs of students and families.

This school year, as schools across the country are planning staggered schedules, hybrid learning, and virtual learning to keep children, families, and our communities safe, the hours students are physically “out of school” will increase dramatically compared to previous school years.

We need to work together to tap all the assets in our communities to support children and families, and involve afterschool and community partners in school reopening plans and implementation policies.

Together, we can ensure that *all* our children are learning, safe, and engaged; that parents can return to work; and that communities can rebuild their economic strength during the increased periods of “out-of-school time” in the new learning day. The full [Blueprint for How Afterschool Programs & Community Partners Can Help](#) can be accessed [here](#).

National Organizations in Support

Afterschool Alliance
After-School All-Stars
Alliance for a Healthier Generation
AlphaBEST Education, Inc.
America SCORES
American Alliance of Museums
American Association for State and Local History
American Camp Association
American Institutes for Research
Americans for the Arts
America's Promise Alliance
Association of Children's Museums
Association of Science and Technology Centers
Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)
Big Brothers Big Sisters of America
BOOST Collaborative
Boys and Girls Clubs of America
CampFire
Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
Classroom, Inc
Coaching Corps
Coalition for Community Schools
Committee for Children
Communities in Schools
Council for Strong America
Education Redesign Lab, Harvard Graduate School of Education
Education Trust
Every Hour Counts
Excelencia in Education
First Tee
Food Research & Action Center
Foundations, Inc
Girl Scouts of the USA
Girls Inc.
Girls on the Run
Global Family Research Project
Institute for Educational Leadership
kid-grit
Learning Policy Institute
MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership
National 4-H Council
National AfterSchool Association
National Alliance for Public Charter Schools
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Girls Collaborative Project
National League of Cities
National Recreation and Park Association
National Summer Learning Association
National Youth Leadership Council
Outward Bound USA
Rural School and Community Trust
Save the Children
School-Based Health Alliance
Search Institute
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center (SEARAC)
STEM Next Opportunity Fund
Teach for America
Techbridge
The Forum for Youth Investment
United Way Worldwide
US Chamber of Commerce Foundation
Write Brain
YMCA of the USA
Young Rembrandts
Youth Service America