



## Expanding **minds** and Opportunities

Leveraging

# the Power of Afterschool and Summer Learning for Student Success

This article is an excerpt from the groundbreaking book, ***Expanding Minds and Opportunities: Leveraging the Power of Afterschool and Summer Learning for Student Success***. This landmark compendium, edited by Terry K. Peterson, PhD, is composed of nearly 70 research studies, reports, essays, and commentaries by more than 100 researchers, educators, community leaders, policy makers, and practitioners.

Collectively, these writings boldly state that there is now a solid base of research and best practices clearly showing that quality afterschool and summer learning programs—including 21st Century Community Learning Centers—make a positive difference for students, families, schools, and communities.

Together, the collection of articles demonstrates the power of quality expanded learning opportunities to:

- **promote student success and college and career readiness;**
- **build youth assets such as character, resilience, and wellness;**
- **foster partnerships that maximize resources and build community ties; and**
- **engage families in their children's learning in meaningful ways.**

For information on how to order the full book, download sections and individual articles, or explore the topic areas, visit [www.expandinglearning.org/expandingminds](http://www.expandinglearning.org/expandingminds).

### About the Expanded Learning and Afterschool Project

The Expanded Learning and Afterschool Project is a 50-state initiative harnessing the power of networks and leaders to help schools and communities leverage the time beyond school to accelerate student achievement. A partnership of funders led by the C.S. Mott Foundation support the Expanded Learning and Afterschool Project. More information about the book and the project, as well as additional resources, can be found at [www.expandinglearning.org](http://www.expandinglearning.org).

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# Making Partnerships Work for Policies That Expand Learning Opportunities: Statewide Afterschool Networks

Statewide afterschool networks are defining new ways of collaborating and shaping policies and practices for afterschool and expanded learning opportunities across the country. From Rhode Island to California, this national network of statewide afterschool networks has successfully sustained an afterschool movement dedicated to ensuring that all students have access to engaging and effective programming. “There is no doubt that these systems and infrastructures are based on the ideas that individuals and institutions can work toward a common goal and that long-term partnerships can make a difference,” notes Heather Weiss, founder and director of the Harvard Family Research Project.

Now in 41 states, with expectations of growing to more, the statewide afterschool networks—through the support of the C.S. Mott Foundation and other funders—are focused on actively engaging and educating key decision makers in support of effective school and community-based afterschool programs, particularly in underserved communities.

## Designing a New Way for Collaboration

Since 2002, the C.S. Mott Foundation has provided competitive funding to coalitions of key stakeholders in states committed to furthering afterschool and expanded learning policies and practices. The initiative was built on the public-private partnership started in 1998 between the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the C.S. Mott Foundation to support the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant program. The public dollars directly support the programs, while the Mott Foundation funds activities better suited to philanthropy than government, such as providing technical assistance, generating public will, identifying promising practices, supporting research and evaluation, and developing options for public policy.



resources despite difficult economic times. These networks are also cultivating multiple leverage points to expand learning opportunities, including aligning afterschool and summer learning with policy agendas in education, child care, health and wellness, juvenile justice, nutrition, and others. Impact is assessed across a spectrum of results, from policy wins to diffusing threats to cutting afterschool funding to assisting municipal leaders in supporting quality afterschool programming. Even with limited resources and capacity, networks are high-impact investments.

An internal evaluation report from the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) (2010) concluded, “networks have made real strides toward building statewide infrastructure and policy support for afterschool programs, and have done so against a backdrop of change and uncertainty” (p. 51).

For more than a decade networks have ascribed to three common goals and report on their activities against those goals:

- 1. Creating sustainable partnership structures for policy development.** Networks understand that partnerships of influential individuals, agencies, and organizations are essential in showing policymakers and others that the support and need for afterschool programs is widespread and real. “Creating networks that are widely representative means continually working to bring new voices to the table while keeping all members of the network engaged,” remarked Kacy Conley, network lead for the Pennsylvania Statewide Afterschool/Youth Development Network.

Engaging the right stakeholders helps make the network agenda fit the needs of the state and makes it more likely that policy developments align with the network goals. Impact is measured in small and large ways:

*The Positive Youth Development Grant Program Act was passed by the Arkansas legislature in 2011 and signed into law. It builds off of the 2008 recommendations of the Governor’s Task Force on Best Practices for After-School and Summer Programs by establishing a structure for a system of state-funded afterschool and summer programs.*

*In Illinois, the After-school Youth Development Program Act, SB 3543, was signed into law in July 2010 and creates a framework for coordinating and strengthening afterschool services in the state.*

## **Statewide Afterschool Network Goals**

### **2002–present**

1. Create a sustainable structure of statewide, regional, and local partnerships, particularly school–community partnerships, focused on supporting policy development at all levels.
2. Support the development and growth of statewide policies that will secure the resources necessary to secure and sustain new and existing school-based and school-linked afterschool programs.
3. Support statewide systems to ensure programs are of high quality.

*In Rhode Island, the General Assembly passed H5967, which created a Joint Legislative Taskforce on Summer Learning. The taskforce also explored several high quality summer programs for all grade levels and made recommendations on ways to improve access to summer learning in the state. The taskforce reported its findings and recommendations in a report to the General Assembly in May 2010 and helped to develop the framework for funding that was included in the state FY2013 budget to pilot this work.*

- 2. Support statewide policies to secure funding.** Expanded learning opportunities are funded by an array of public and private dollars from multiple levels of government and under many agency banners—from human services to childcare to juvenile justice to education. Yet if bringing together the varied pieces and players in the afterschool picture is a challenge, many network leads say that educating policymakers on the need for more funding in an era of record budget deficits is the most pressing challenge today.

Lean state budgets have led many networks to adopt a more comprehensive approach to funding and expanding learning opportunities. Although difficult, new funding is possible. Examples include the following:

*Connecticut successfully advocated for the creation of a new \$5 million annual grant program for afterschool programming (now \$4.5 million).*

*The Massachusetts state legislature created a statewide commission to examine the state's afterschool programs and recommended improvements. The commission's report helped build support for a more than 150% increase in funding for state programs, from \$2 million to \$5.5 million.*

*The Washington legislature passed the 2007–2009 biennial budget with \$3 million allocated specifically for afterschool grants, marking the first time that the budget ever included dedicated state funds to support afterschool programs.*

*Shaping policy to make afterschool and summer learning an “allowable” use of existing or new funding also advances the work significantly. For instance, in Oregon, the state passed a law in which \$260 million in “school improvement funds” can be used for a variety of programs that raise student achievement, including afterschool programs.*

- 3. Support systems to ensure quality.** The quality design and delivery of afterschool and summer programs is a top priority of every afterschool network. Networks spearhead tough conversations about quality, bring the right stakeholders to the table, and facilitate consensus on standards and creating quality systems. “Quality is the most important conversation we can have,” said Katie Magrane, lead of the Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership (MAP). “We can all agree that afterschool and out-of-school-time programs should be providing youth with hands-on experiential activities that complement in-school learning, support social-emotional development, and have an intentional focus on student outcomes.”

More than 34 states<sup>1</sup> now have quality standards for afterschool and summer programs and most were developed (directly or indirectly) by the networks. The standards development process itself is an engagement process, with networks counting upwards of 70 organizational partners engaged and hundreds of program staff and families involved.

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Widely adapted by other states, the New York network recently revised the Program Quality Self-Assessment (QSA) Tool. This tool is mandated by the New York State Education Department for all 21st Century Community Learning Centers in the state, the Office of Children and Family Services for programs receiving After School Advantage funds, and by New York City’s Department of Community and Youth Development for programs receiving funds for out-of-school-time programs.

Additionally, networks play a key role in professional development of afterschool professionals, providing conferences, workshops, webinars, academies, and other supports for frontline afterschool staff and directors. “We work to broker professional development opportunities,” said Jamie Knowles-Griffiths, network lead for the North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs (NC CAP). “We work with school

districts, colleges and others to involve afterschool professionals.” Laveta Wills-Hale, lead for the Arkansas Out of School Network, added, “Networks bring people together to define quality. We’re working to ensure expanded learning opportunities are supported, sustained, and aligned with education systems.”

### **Unencumbered Supports: Afterschool Technical Assistance Collaborative (ATAC)**

Nearly every day a network will contact a member of the Afterschool Technical Assistance Collaborative (ATAC) seeking advice on issues small and large, from how to engage key stakeholders to how to refine a governance structure for the network, to how to pursue a policy agenda like awarding credit to students based on mastery of content and skills as opposed to seat time. The easy accessibility of ATAC to the networks and the “just in time” technical assistance has been critical to the health, longevity, and sustainability of the networks. “I turn to our national partners at ATAC to get the pulse of national discussions and work that’s being done by other networks across the country. This helps us adapt to broader issues and utilize what’s working elsewhere to benefit Iowa,” explained Michelle Rich, network lead of the Iowa Afterschool Alliance.

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1. Several states are currently developing quality standards.

Before the first cohort of statewide networks was selected, ATAC was formed as a team of national organizations and leaders funded by the C.S. Mott Foundation to support the networks. ATAC includes the Afterschool Alliance, American Institutes for Research, Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), the Finance Project, National Conference of State Legislatures, National Governors Association, and National League of Cities, with assistance from Terry Peterson of the College of Charleston Foundation, FowlerHoffman, Mainspring Consulting, and Collaborative Communications Group.

By modeling partnerships needed to influence policy at the national level, ATAC supports the networks directly through its expertise, advice, and potential collaborations with initiatives such as STEM, early childhood, or digital media and learning. “We often say that our role is to facilitate and ‘set the table’ providing the space and time for collaborating on network challenges and opportunities,” remarked Victoria Wegener, a partner at Mindspring Consulting, a key technical assistance provider to the networks. With the support of ATAC, the ability to network and share experiences and strategies with one another both in-person and virtually through national meetings, monthly calls and webinars, and an online community has been crucial to the success of networks. In addition, individual ATAC organizations work on projects to educate their members on how afterschool advances policy priorities, like the CCSSO Innovation Lab Network or the National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education and Families support to mayoral summits across the country.

## **The Future**

For more young people to succeed educationally and in life, a strong education system that includes both school and expanded learning opportunities throughout the year is vital. “It is imperative that we focus a spotlight on the ways kids learn, the opportunities they need to succeed academically, and how we might shape a system that encourages more of them to stay in school, graduate, and go on to become productive contributors to society,” articulates William S. White, President and CEO of the C.S. Mott Foundation. A system that scaffolds multiple approaches, demands innovation, reinforces learning in and out of school, and provides students with a diverse array of school and community-based educators is a giant step in the right direction.

**Although there is not yet a silver bullet for fixing public education, afterschool programs are a “silver lining,” and the statewide afterschool networks need to maintain their important role in re-imagining how, when, and where students learn.**

The opportunities afforded by being a part of a vibrant national network allow each statewide afterschool network to stay abreast of the latest innovations, people, resources, issues, and windows of opportunity and prepare for thoughtful and strategic action over the long haul. A 21st century learning system that ensures all young people have the opportunity to succeed in school and work, and contribute to society, depends on the diligence, organization, and passion of the networks and their ability to constantly evolve and embrace challenge.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**An-Me Chung** served as a program officer at the C.S. Mott Foundation from 2000-2010 where she focused grantmaking on building systems to support young people with optimal opportunities for learning and enrichment beyond the traditional classroom. She currently serves as associate director of education for U.S. Programs at the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. In this role, she focuses on grants relating to public education and the implications for education of young people's use of digital media. Previous jobs include associate director at the National Institute on Out-of-School Time at the Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College. There, she worked with the Corporation for National and Community Service and the U.S. Department of Education and directed the Save the Children Out-of-School Time Rural Initiative. Chung holds a BS from Washington University in St. Louis, a PhD from Yale University, and completed a post-doctorate fellowship at Columbia University.

**Gwynn Hughes** is a program officer at the C. S. Mott Foundation where she manages the Learning Beyond the Classroom portfolio, seeking to provide optimum opportunities for academic support and enrichment for young people to learn and develop in school, summer, and afterschool. Formerly, Hughes was executive director of the Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership (MAP)—the Massachusetts statewide afterschool network—where she led a statewide coalition to improve afterschool programs, including the establishment of a legislative commission on afterschool and out-of-school time and the identification of new state funding for afterschool programs. Hughes holds a bachelor's degree from Wellesley College, a juris doctorate degree from Northeastern University and a master's degree in music from the University of Virginia.

**Terri Ferinde Dunham** manages the National Network of Statewide Afterschool Networks and creates opportunities for the networks to connect and share learning. As a partner at Collaborative Communications Group, she works with foundations, nonprofits, government agencies, and communities to reimagine when, where, and how children and adults learn. Currently, she also leads the Expanded Learning and Afterschool project funded by the C. S. Mott Foundation. Previously, she served for 10 years at the U.S. Department of Education where she produced a live, interactive television program featuring school and community leaders.