



Expanding **minds** and Opportunities

Section 2: Expanding Skills and Horizons

Leveraging

**the Power of Afterschool
and Summer Learning
for Student Success**

A compendium of studies, reports, and commentaries by 100+ professionals and policy leaders on the best practices, impact, and future of expanded learning opportunities

Terry K. Peterson, PhD, Executive Editor

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Gene R. Carter

Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer, ASCD
(formerly the Association for Supervision
and Curriculum Development)

The Importance of Educating and Developing Many Aspects of the “Whole” Child

Each second we live is a new and unique moment of the universe, a moment that will never be again. And what do we teach our children? We teach them that two and two make four and that Paris is the capital of France. When will we also teach them what they are?

We should say to each of them: do you know what you are? You are a marvel. You are unique. In all the years that have passed, there has never been another child like you...

You may become a Shakespeare, a Michelangelo, a Beethoven. You have the capacity for anything. Yes, you are a marvel.

- Pablo Casals

Imagine a conversation about learning. In many places and situations the conversation would quickly change from “learning” to “achievement on standardized tests.” In others, it would shift from learning to teaching. But in far too few cases would it remain on “learning”—the one concept that specifically and unequivocally draws our thoughts to the child as he or she exists now and as he or she will exist in the future. To be clear, achievement is not the same as learning. And, as an educator willing to tell the truth will admit, neither is teaching.

Learning is what prepares young people for meaningful citizenship, employment, postsecondary education, and active participation in a global society. It is developmental and experiential. It is not restricted to time or space, adult qualification or status, intent or accident. Learning is the only thing that matters. And children do learn. The question we must ask ourselves is whether they learn that which we believe will help them succeed.

At ASCD, we believe, and decades of research confirm, that certain conditions maximize children's opportunity to learn. We have committed through our Whole Child Initiative to ensuring that each child, in each school, in each community is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. Joined by more than 60 partners across the spectrum of education associations, recreation and health organizations, arts, history, civics, and other content-based nonprofits in the United States and beyond, we have called on educators, families, community organizations, and policy makers to change the conversation from one of "schooling" to one of "learning" and to take definitive action to realize a vision for the whole child that currently only exists on paper.

We seek nothing less than to revolutionize the way children learn. This means during the typical school day, as well as by including engaging expanded learning opportunities in afterschool, weekends, and summers as part of that equation, especially for struggling students.

For too long, in too many schools, young people have been provided a learning experience that so undermotivates, undereducates, underprepares, and underincludes that they are left reaching for remedial preparation for the careers, further education, and civic participation they seek. In the worst situations, young people are neither healthy nor safe, neither engaged nor supported, and certainly not challenged.

In others, schools with seemingly healthy school cultures (little bullying, supportive staff-student relationships, wraparound supports for families, etc.) fail to hold high expectations for each child and instead create an environment of academic pity that fails to prepare even graduates for meaningful career, college, and civic next steps. In still others, the emphasis on academic rigor, rote memorization, and test preparation is so disproportionate that students experience high levels of social-emotional stress. This leads to a disconnection from school and the community and creates boredom in a culture of repetition from school that can extend into afterschool, weekend, and summer activities if we do not design and deliver expanded learning opportunities so they are more engaging, more personalized, more enriching, and include school-community collaboration and family involvement. Rather than a broadening of learning, more of the same only longer will leave increasing numbers of young people unprepared for anything beyond the world of multiple-choice exams. We can and must do better both

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during the regular school day as well as in quality expanded learning programs after school and during the summer, which are typically less hampered by too much of the educational system's "red tape" that regulates the typical day and year.

In the current system, of course, children learn. They learn that only some kinds of kids make it. They learn that art and physical education are "special." They learn that creativity is for free time. They learn that information, skills, interests, and opinions are irrelevant if they are not on the test and that scores define their worth. This needs to change during the regular school day if we are to be successful, but afterschool and summer programs through school-community partnerships can also be a good source of arts and creative learning, physical fitness and health, engagement in hands-on science, learning about the world, using digital learning to expand horizons—all building on and expanding the school day and the very essence of learning.

While the United States continues to pursue a regimen of "if at first you don't succeed, do the same thing longer or fire everyone involved" thinking, the rest of the world seeks opportunities to stimulate creativity, critical thinking, content application, and joy in the learning process. They intentionally and strategically move away from the standardized testing that serves as the North Star of the U.S. system of educational reform and find new options to provide seamless experiences from home to school to after school to work to life.

What if we closed the believing-doing gap that leads us to believe that each child should be healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged, while we simultaneously pursue actions that defeat exactly that purpose? What if, instead, each child entered school healthy and learned about and practiced a healthy lifestyle? What if each child learned in an environment that was physically and emotionally safe for children and adults? What if broad learning, and not narrow multiple-choice tests, allowed her to be actively engaged in learning—in school, after school, on weekends, and during breaks—that connected her both to school and to the community? What if he had access to personalized learning unbound by time and space, supported by qualified, caring adults? What if they all were challenged academically and prepared for success in college or further education and for employment and participation in a global economy? What if the flexibility of afterschool, weekend, and summer programs were leveraged to directly connect more young people, particularly those who are struggling, to see and experience careers and learn about college?

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We can make this vision of a system focused on learning the reality for each child. Together we can eliminate the barriers of time, money, geography, role, and expertise to ensure that each child is healthy so that she may learn in pace with her development. By expanding learning opportunities after school and in summers, we can ensure that each child is safe—academically, emotionally, and physically—so that he may participate in active, authentic, experiential learning opportunities. We can engage students in aligned learning from content area to content area, learning venue to learning venue that reflects their interests and opinions and connects them in meaningful ways to the communities in which they live. We can surround children with adults in a variety of school and community-based roles who conscientiously and consciously attend to the model they provide, the relationship they foster, and the expectations they hold. We can change the conversation from schooling to learning and challenge the very definition of success by raising the bar of performance for ourselves as educators, organizations, and citizens.

Now is the time to move toward the leading edge of learning in expanded opportunities afterschool, summers, weekends and through school-community partnerships. I invite you to leap; to take bold action; to revolutionize the way you learn, teach, and lead so that each child among us learns each day that he or she is a marvel.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gene R. Carter is a veteran educator with experience as a private and public school teacher, public school administrator, superintendent of schools, and university professor. He is active in community, business, and civic organizations. He assumed his position of executive director and CEO of ASCD (formerly the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) in 1992.

Milton Chen

Senior Fellow, The George Lucas
Educational Foundation

The Rise of *Any Time, Any Place, Any Path, Any Pace* Learning: Afterschool and Summer as the New American Frontier for Innovative Learning

Pause for a just a second. . . . Take a moment to think about the sheer number of fundamental changes and major trends that have affected our students, families, and education over the past decade.

Some might acknowledge that we're lucky to be living in a unique time in history—a time in which global, social, and economic forces in the early 21st century have rewritten the rules we lived by in the 20th century, in politics, economics, and now education, globally. Others might see these changes as challenging, perhaps even frightening.

Regardless of your perspective, these changes are dramatically changing what our students and their families face in order to be equipped to live, learn, and succeed in the 21st century. New types of learning opportunities, partnerships, and time and space configurations are emerging. The wave of the future is evident in new and expanded options for learning after school, over the weekend, and during the summer through new school-family-community partnerships.

We have crossed over what was once a distant horizon, barely a glimmer in a futurist's eye. A new landscape of learning is coming into sharper focus. As NYU lecturer and author Clay Shirky (2009) says in his marvelous TED talk, "The moment we're living through is [seeing] the largest increase in expressive capability in human history." Everyone—notably in our younger generation—can now be a producer of knowledge and not just a consumer of someone else's version of it. Today's learners were born digital and are used to having the world of information at their fingertips and in their pockets.

2010 may mark the first year of the 21st century in education, when we crossed the chasm between the analog and digital worlds in education. Educators and policy makers in the United States and abroad are embracing a new willingness to think differently

about education, what I call the Thinking Edge of innovation in schools (Chen, 2010). Today, we can see, much more clearly than even 3 years ago, how learning can occur “any time, any place, any path, any pace.” Schools and homes continue to be important places for learning, but not exclusively.

Many education experts, such as Bob Wise from the Alliance for Excellent Education, Michael Levine from the Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop, and Alexis Menten of the Asia Society, understand the importance of the “third learning space,”

the many places where students learn in ways not bounded by the schedule of the school day, the limitations of the four classroom walls, or the location of one’s home. These places include afterschool programs, museums, science centers, libraries, parks, and anywhere students can connect with the Internet and their “learning partners.”

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The real issue behind the achievement gap is an “experience gap”: students living very narrow lives within a tight social and geographic network. The expansion of their “experience portfolio” requires more learning time and contact with more caring adults who can show them the wider world. These are strengths of afterschool programs that leverage time during afternoons, evenings, weekends, and summers.

President John Hennessy of Stanford University has described its model students as “T-students” (Auletta, 2012): students who not only have a tremendous breadth of interests, knowledge, and skills, but also an impressive depth of knowledge in a particular domain. A T-shaped education

should start early, giving our youngest students the broadest possible exposure to many learning experiences and places, spanning the arts, history, literacy, sports, and the STEM disciplines, creating the long, horizontal part of their T. Social/emotional learning should be a vital platform for developing persistent, confident, and collaborative learners. Through these varied experiences, students are more likely to discover their true passion that can lead to deep expertise, the vertical part of that T.

Taking project-based and place-based learning to its ultimate expression, students can now pursue personalized, passion-based learning. This should be the goal of a 21st century education: to find one’s passion and develop it. While traditional schooling offers limited courses and extracurriculars that do not map fully onto students’ many interests, afterschool programs can expand their options and help them locate more experiences and mentors in their communities and online.

Two recent examples of the power of the “third learning space” come to mind. I joined a team from the California Afterschool Network in a site visit to an afterschool program at an elementary school in San Jose. We were using the visit to inform our thinking about a website that would offer training and activities for STEM education. We observed 4th-graders, organized in small teams, in animated conversations about the best way to build a “marble roller coaster” using a marble and foam tubes, doing hands-on physics and engineering. What impressed me most was how quickly, once given the goal of the activity and the materials, these young students were able to design, test, and improve their roller coasters—and how much they enjoyed it.

I also recently participated in an evening videoconference with a group of high school students near San Francisco at the Redwood City Peapod Academy, whose partners include the Black Eyed Peas, Adobe Youth Voices, and the International Education & Resource Network (IEARN). The American students, largely Latino, spoke with two separate groups of boy and girl students in Pakistan during their morning, quickly learning about cultural values that prohibit girls from traveling and limitations on broadband Internet access.

I told the Pakistani students that I was honored to witness this exchange, since it was my first time speaking with students there. When Osama bin Laden was taken there weeks later, I'm certain all of those present that evening thought of those students and how more online student exchanges like it could contribute to a more peaceful world.

The rise of the afterschool and summer learning movement continues to be a bright spot in the new landscape of American education. Often delivered through school-community partnerships, the programs encompassed by this movement help to engage and broaden students' experiences from their lives in school or at home. This is a distinctly American invention, fueled by the commitment and perseverance of thousands of local educators and a broad spectrum of nonprofit, public, and private partners. Some may try to rein in this innovative movement to make learning look more like that offered during a typical 20th-century school day, but that would be a move in the wrong direction in light of global, social, and economic forces prevalent in the early 21st century. The afterschool and summer learning movement is a key driver of break-the-mold efforts to provide children with any time, any place, any path, any pace learning opportunities and is thus on the leading edge of the future of education.

But . . . let's keep this a secret from policy makers in Finland and Singapore. If they understand the types of creative learning going on in this "third learning space," they will create these places and programs for every child in their countries. On the other hand, perhaps we should learn a lesson from them and scale the innovations we've "Made in America" to every child here.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Milton Chen is senior fellow and executive director, emeritus, at The George Lucas Educational Foundation in the San Francisco Bay Area (edutopia.org). He also serves as chairman of the Panasonic Foundation and the education committee of the National Park System Advisory Board. Chen's 2010 book, *Education Nation: Six Leading Edges of Innovation in Our Schools*, was selected as a top book of the year by the American School Board Journal.

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Bob Wise

President, Alliance for Excellent Education
and Former Governor, West Virginia

Terri Duggan Schwartzbeck

Senior Policy Associate, Alliance for
Excellent Education

Technology Makes Learning Available 24/7: Digital Learning in Expanded Learning Spaces After School and During the Summertime

- Students in a shopping mall office space, retaking courses they previously failed
- A group of inner-city students producing a high-quality music video that features poetry, sociology, and urban development
- Teens participating in nationwide arts events while developing graphic design skills or learning video gaming technology
- Students gathering to compete in robotics competitions
- A school district increasing student achievement over the summer while tightening its budget

These are all examples of how digital learning can have a powerful impact on the lives of students outside the regular classroom. Such opportunities are increasingly within reach for schools, districts, and communities.

The need for these opportunities is great. The future of the American economy increasingly depends upon students graduating from high school ready for college and a career. Momentum is building to expand learning time for students to help meet these challenges, but most efforts have been focused on elementary and middle school students. Meanwhile, many of the nation's high school students are still struggling. Schools now have an opportunity to accelerate the pace of improvement by taking advantage of the learning opportunities offered by the effective use of technology in afterschool, weekend, and summer learning environments and by building new or better partnerships with community organizations, employers, and 2- and 4-year colleges.

Almost three out of ten students fail to graduate from high school within four years, and the number of over-age, under-credited students continues to plague American secondary education. There are many reasons why students drop out: boredom, lack of motivation, pregnancy, or the need to work (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2010). Even among those who do graduate from high school, only about one in four students is deemed college-ready in all four tested subjects on the ACT, and one in three students will need to take at least one remedial course at the postsecondary level. Together, these challenges have significant implications for the nation's economy (ACT, 2011; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).

Despite ongoing efforts to improve public K–12 schooling, this lack of progress is not entirely surprising. The American high school experience, despite enormous changes in the global economy and advances in technology, has remained largely the same over the last 50 years. Schools are still confined to the 180-day school year and the 6-hour school day. At the same time, dwindling budgets have become commonplace in most states and districts.

Multiple forces are converging to create a significant opportunity to influence education powerfully within the next 2–3 years. The technology available for instruction continues to improve, while the cost of that technology continues to decrease. More and more students today are digital natives, already accustomed to the rapid feedback, collaborative nature, and ease of use of many digital technologies. Schools are ramping up for the online assessments linked to the Common Core State Standards adopted by most states (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2012). Additionally, recent federal regulatory trends are freeing states and districts to innovate with greater freedom and flexibility. To accelerate the pace of progress, every institution focused on the education of youth should have a comprehensive strategy for the effective use of digital learning tools to improve career and college readiness or risk continued stagnation.

Successful Technology Strategy Elements

Leaders looking to expand learning opportunities through technology and digital learning should begin with a strategic review of their goals, challenges, and current settings. There is no one right solution or strategy, and the effective use of digital learning outside the regular classroom can look very different in various learning environments. It is also critical that leaders focus on the instructional needs of students first and then look at the ways in which technology can be used as a tool to meet those needs. Local and state education leaders need to redefine their roles in order to function as “orchestra conductors of learning.” They should tap the rich array of available and reliable community, business, and college partners to deliver and support digital learning during the afterschool hours, weekends, and summers, rather than rely exclusively on a single instrument for delivering instruction—the traditional school (that is, the traditional 6 hour school day, the 180-day school year, and school spaces) that have defined and constrained formal learning opportunities for children and youth for generations.

Expanding learning time is a key strategy for schools and districts desiring to be more innovative and economically efficient in how they structure and deliver teaching and learning. The idea of anytime, anyplace learning has especially strong potential for high school students, whose unique needs and challenges are often best met outside the traditional high school structure. Consequently, school and community leaders should consider a range of options for expanding learning time.

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Summer programs

Summer is a critical time for districts hoping to make progress in closing the achievement gap. Summer learning loss is well documented, and many districts struggle to fund or support summer learning programs. Technology can make these programs more accessible and affordable. At Rawlins High School, in the rural town of Rawlins, Wyoming, students have access to many summer school options through a blended-learning program in which they spend some time in the school and some time participating in the courses online. Because of the reduced costs to the district, Rawlins is able to provide access to many more courses for the same total price while keeping at-risk students on track for graduation (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011).

Walled Lake Consolidated School District, in Oakland County, Michigan, has been implementing a one-to-one laptop program (one laptop per student) since 1999. The district began offering summer school programs online in 2008, starting with 300 students. This approach has helped the district cut per-student summer school costs nearly in half. The program utilizes a blended approach, with an online course combined with biweekly face-to-face interactions with a teacher (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

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Afterschool programs

There are also many examples of the successful use of technology-based learning programs that operate during the hours after school. In Wichita, Kansas, the school district operates dropout recovery centers in which students can take computer-based courses in office spaces in local malls and community centers and on high school campuses. Licensed teachers are onsite, and the hours are flexible. Credit recovery centers located inside high schools serve students who have fallen behind but not yet dropped out by allowing them to take courses after school. The cost of these centers is just one-third of the district's per-pupil expenditure (Mackey, 2010). Another center, LifeSkills, of Orange County, Florida, is a public charter school located in a shopping center. Many of LifeSkills' students had dropped out or were failing when they came to the center. Students advance based on demonstrated competency. Many of these students hold jobs and, therefore, need a flexible school schedule; the school's design and technology meet that need (Wise, 2011).

The Thurgood Marshall Academy for Leadership and Social Change is a Harlem middle school. As a member of The After-School Corporation's (TASC's) network of expanded learning time schools, the academy partners with the Abyssinian Development Corporation (ADC) to expand the learning day by 3 additional hours. Terrance Roumph, a math teacher, uses the Khan Academy's online video library to provide students with interactive practice exercises, immediate assessment, and feedback after 3:00 p.m. Students view tutorial videos and practice at their own pace while they review the day's concepts and preview the next day's topics. Embedded assessment and tracking components provide the teacher with immediate feedback, allowing him to plan face-to-face interventions with students. Thanks to the school's shared staffing with the ADC, Roumph is joined by an AmeriCorps member, who helps students with everything from logging on to socio-emotional issues. Roumph also found that using online tutorials engages parents and guardians, who log on to help their children at home and track their progress (Curry & Jackson-Smarr, 2012).

Expanding the times during which high school students can access learning can promote college and career readiness through increased time for core academic subjects, more personalized and customized learning, and on-call tutoring services. Some school districts have also found that when they implement one-to-one technology initiatives or bring-your-own-device programs, supported by adequate Internet access and learning management systems that are available 24 hours a day, they are effectively lengthening the school day. In Forsyth County, Georgia, Chief Technology Officer Bailey Mitchell found that the district's bandwidth use increased dramatically during the afterschool hours and in the evenings as students logged on to the district learning system to continue their work (Mitchell, 2012).

Expanded Learning Time at a Crossroads

The research supporting the use of technology in expanded learning time is still in its infancy because the pace of technological innovation is so rapid; however, an analysis of multiple high-functioning afterschool programs shows that students in technology-rich programs attend for longer amounts of time, and that staff in those programs receive more professional development and have higher expectations for their students. Additionally, technology-based programs are more likely to present material in relevant and engaging ways (Huang et al., 2010). An analysis of one technology-based literacy program, Scholastic's "Read 180," shows that computer-based programs can be successfully implemented in out-of-school settings with proper planning and accommodations (Hartry, Fitzgerald, & Porter, 2008).

Expanded learning programs now stand at a crossroads. Over the next 2 years, as states work to implement college- and career-ready standards along with online assessments, there are opportunities for expanded learning programs after school and during summers to step up and partner with communities, 2- to 4-year colleges, schools, and states to provide strategic, integrated, and powerful learning opportunities. It is imperative that schools and communities come together to develop plans and action steps for how they can not only better utilize technology to accelerate the pace of improvement, but also do so outside of the traditional classroom—after school, during the summer, and in ways that make learning truly a 24/7 experience.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Bob Wise is president of the Alliance for Excellent Education, a national policy and advocacy organization that works to promote high school transformation to make it possible for every child to graduate prepared for postsecondary learning and success in life. Wise has become one of the nation's strongest leaders in promoting the effective use of technology, college- and career-ready standards, and high expectations for high school graduation rates. He is former governor of West Virginia and chairs the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Terri Duggan Schwartzbeck is a senior policy associate at the Alliance for Excellent Education, where her areas of focus include digital learning, connecting in-school and out-of-school learning, and rural education. She coordinates a wide range of webinars, social media efforts, and works on the Alliance's Digital Learning Day campaign. She has a master's degree in public policy from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

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Michael H. Levine

Executive Director, Joan Ganz Cooney
Center at Sesame Workshop

Rafi Santo

Graduate Research Assistant, Indiana University

Upgrading Afterschool: Common Sense Shifts in Expanded Learning for a Digital Age

The days when summer and afterschool learning programs that only offered “safe custodial care” were considered fine are thankfully behind us. Tectonic social changes—including demographic shifts that have placed most women with school-age children in the labor force, research breakthroughs in the learning sciences and in socio-emotional and brain development, and daunting national achievement worries—have all converged to place a major new emphasis on the quality of a child’s learning experiences throughout the typical school day, after school, weekends, and across the year, including summers.

Over the past decade the C. S. Mott Foundation, the Wallace Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, and others have conducted groundbreaking programmatic and research initiatives to expand learning time after school and during the summer. These initiatives have defined “a new day for learning” (Herr-Stephenson, Rhoten, Perkel, & Sims, 2011; Time, Learning, and Afterschool Task Force, 2007). The recent convergence of scholarly research, program development efforts, and policy advocacy work have all pushed in the direction of a fresh “ecological” framework for learning that nests more responsibility in the nonschool hours. This “mind shift” has been helpfully characterized by scholars at the National Science Foundation’s Learning in Formal and Informal Environments (LIFE) Center as the “life-long, life-wide, and life-deep” approach to learning (Banks et al., 2007). Such a shift characterizes a natural progression in how we should think about learning in the 21st century.

It is now broadly understood that expanded learning programs can and must be much more than “graham crackers and basketball”—that is, they can play a critical role in young people’s lives. But what does a real mind shift look like? Currently, there exist dramatically different visions of the desired outcomes of expanded learning time programs. One vision is that afterschool and summer learning programs should be aligned with current education reform efforts—high-stakes testing, narrow accountability, and the Common Core State Standards that are directed at just two subjects. Another view—and the one we argue for here—is that expanded learning-time programs should exist as part of the larger ecology of a young person’s 21st century existence. This ecology is framed by the digital, interconnected world in which we all live and should, therefore, incorporate systemic links between what are now disparate venues of learning. Thus, we place great priority on youth participation and productivity in learning opportunities that burnish their civic and collaborative skills through the creative, evolving digital technologies so ubiquitous in the world.

Research shows that the past decade’s focus on accountability and high-stakes testing is leading to a more intensive emphasis on reaching all children, but it is inadvertently resulting in a curriculum for many low-income children that is narrower, fragmented, and oriented towards “direct instruction” instead of student-driven inquiry (Au, 2007). The Common Core, while arguably a strong baseline for student learning in the United States, are rightfully being criticized for a weak emphasis on 21st century competencies like creativity, collaboration, and communication (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2010), as well as for a narrow focus on only reading and math.

A New Vision for Learning

Expanding learning-time programs that focus with all good intentions on remediation and tutoring, but that extend traditional school structures into afterschool time, may experience weak attendance and missed opportunities because these efforts are too often disconnected from the rich learning lives of today’s youth. The Kaiser Family Foundation’s “Generation M” research and the qualitative work of Mimi Ito and colleagues (2009) document the explosion of interest in digital technologies that allow youth not only to “media multitask,” but also to explore, create, and share knowledge around their personal interests and across many knowledge domains. We believe that these experiences can be significantly leveraged and augmented in expanded learning-time environments.

We advocate another vision for out-of-school-time organizations—one that positions young people as creators, makers, and innovators. Our vision will allow youth to go deep into 21st century learning by focusing on *knowledge production* with the technologies pervasive in our world. Youth are increasingly doing incredible things through their engagement with digital media. For example, in online multiplayer games, they are collaborating with sometimes hundreds of people around the world to tackle complex challenges in the form of dragons to be slain. In fan communities, they write and rewrite favorite books like *Harry Potter*, extending plotlines and creating alternate endings, all the while engaging in rigorous feedback and revision processes that English teachers would admire.

Key Principles for Program Design

There are several outstanding models of innovation in the expanded learning-time domain that suggest a set of key principles to guide afterschool and summer learning leaders in designing new, digitally savvy, and integrated learning environments. The principles offered below are based on an examination of three exemplary innovators in expanded learning time: the YouMedia network, spearheaded by the Chicago Public Library; Global Kids, an afterschool leadership organization based in New York City; and the Computer Clubhouse network, which was developed originally by the MIT Media Lab and now includes approximately 100 community centers in over 20 countries (Kafai, Peppler, & Chapman, 2009).

- 1. Provide technological infrastructure that supports media design and production.** Providing access to technology is essential, of course, but this should be seen only as a first step. Programs should ensure that access to the Internet is relatively unrestricted, that files and programs can be downloaded, and that youth have ways to save personal work and access it using any computer. These elements are all essential to creating a space in which design and production activities with media can promote robust learning. Additionally, program developers should ensure that production-and design-oriented software and hardware are available. At the Computer Clubhouse, and in over 3,000 “Club Tech” centers operated by the Boys and Girls Clubs, software is available that supports computer programming, game design, graphic design, and audio and video production; moreover, hardware, such as video cameras, sound recording equipment, and digital cameras, can be checked out at some centers.
- 2. Create a culture of sharing meaningful media creations.** Some of the most important learning outcomes associated with digital media are tied to creating, sharing, and getting feedback from peers on projects that youth care about. This can happen through gallery showings, performances, screenings, “critique” sessions, and the creation of localized online spaces in which youth can review and comment on each others’ work. In 2009, Global Kids co-founded Emoti-Con, the annual New York City youth media and technology festival that brings together hundreds of youth from across the city to exhibit their digital creations in a public forum, get critiques from both peers as well as professionals, and connect with a larger community of media creators. These kinds of meaningful contexts for sharing work encourage youth to go deep and develop expertise through iteratively improving their projects.
- 3. Provide skilled mentors to support and respond to youth interests.** Adults, as always, have important roles to play in afterschool and summer learning programs. In connected, expanded learning programs, adults often provide mentoring around technology use and promote good citizenship practices associated with new media use and production. At YouMedia, skilled artists serve as mentors, leading workshops on specialized topics and helping youth organize projects around emerging interests. These highly skilled adults provide youth with role models and powerful images of engagement in expert practice and mastery of fundamental skills needed to do well in school and in life.

4. **Create mixed-age spaces.** One of the key aspects of 21st century learning environments is that they feature participants of many ages that have a range of experiences, backgrounds, and areas of expertise. Schools typically maintain the increasingly outmoded practice of grouping children by age, while most other successful learning environments leverage the strengths of mixed-age populations. At the Computer Clubhouse, groups diverse in age and experience ensure that participants can sometimes be learners and sometimes be leaders, with reciprocal benefits accruing on both ends of those relationships.
5. **Design spaces to build relationships!** Peer relationships matter most in effective expanded learning communities. Youth will rarely persist in an activity or remain a member of an organization if they do not form strong relationships to peers or mentors. YouMedia’s model incorporates both unstructured time for developing such relationships, as well as a conducive physical space in which youth can hang out, socialize, and develop bonds.

Recommendations for Extended Learning Practice and Policy in Afterschool and Summer Programs

In a digital age in which technology is a central part of kids’ lives, leaders in the expanded learning-time movement need to embrace a “mind shift” so that the United States can make dramatic progress by building a system of expanded digital learning, one based on pragmatic changes that acknowledge the ways learning is happening in the 21st century. In the next 5 years we recommend the following priority areas for expanding learning investments:

1. **Modernize places in every community.** With the goal of creating a new expanded digital learning road map in every community, each of the nation’s 21st Century Community Learning Centers should undertake its own “digital learning inventory” to determine what is currently being done to advance digital learning in local afterschool and summer programs. These inventories should identify the funds that are currently available, the barriers to using new resources for digital learning in these programs, and the capacity of local partners to contribute tools that are needed for technology-based innovations.
2. **Create professional learning communities.** Youth-serving professionals are too often behind the curve when it comes to understanding the capacities of new media for learning. They should look to models of new online professional communities that are forming across key professional associations and networks, such as the National Writing Project (NWP), Consortium of School Networking (CoSN), and city-based affiliations like the Hive Learning Networks. The expanded learning community should take up the challenge of creating a digitally savvy mentors corps to identify a cadre of capable leaders who can train and support youth-serving professionals, based on a blueprint for teachers offered by Levine and Gee (2011).

- 3. Build capacity and awareness.** A cadre of pioneering expanded learning organizations has already begun program development work around anytime, anywhere learning, including Think Together in California, the Digital Youth Network in Chicago, the Digital On-Ramps initiative in Philadelphia, the Kids and Creativity Coalition in Pittsburgh, and numerous others mentioned throughout this article. They are updating or creating new program materials and projects on digital media and expanded learning themes. We should support these leaders with research and development funds to document successes and failures, invite them to national conferences to share these, and use their models as the focus of the advocacy work of state afterschool networks to expand quality programs for a digital age.

Future investments in local program capacity can be advanced by recruiting champions for expanded digital learning, including governors, mayors, businesses interests in economic development, as well as chief state school officers, state boards, school districts, and influential nonprofit partners. Policy leaders, in particular, can (1) support initiatives that expand broadband availability in all of the federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Centers and in state and locally-funded afterschool sites; (2) encourage robust experimentation with digital platforms that allow expanded learning organizations to collaborate, share practices, and connect experiences that kids are having at various expanded learning sites; and (3) support pilot experiments in up to 10% of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers that focus on integrating evolving technologies.

Over the next 5 years, major innovations in digital technologies and learning are not only possible, but almost inevitable. Investment in educational technologies by venture capital is at a 20-year high (Ash, 2012), and many cutting-edge community educators are fashioning ways to connect the learning happening on youth's own time to what is happening in school and in out-of-school environments. Expanded learning time initiatives, including afterschool and summer programs, should help lead our nation out of its narrow educational mindset by promoting communities in which children and youth are positioned as "makers and creators," based on what they are passionate about. By unlocking new opportunities for "modern" learning, we can drive a pragmatic mind shift that will generate great benefits for our nation.

For More Information

- YouMedia - YouMedia.org
- Global Kids - GlobalKids.org
- Computer Clubhouse - ComputerClubhouse.org
- Club Tech of the Boys and Girls Club of America - myclubmylife.com/clubtech
- TASC's Where the Kids Are - tascorp.org/content/document/detail/3656/
- Digital Youth Network - DigitalYouthNetwork.org
- Common Sense Media's Digital Citizenship Curriculum - www.commonsensemedia.org/educators/curriculum

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Michael H. Levine is the founding director of the Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop, an action research and innovation institute devoted to harnessing the potential of digital media to advance young children’s learning and development. Previously, Levine oversaw Carnegie Corporation of New York’s groundbreaking work in early childhood development, educational media, and primary grades reform, and was a senior advisor to the New York City Schools Chancellor, where he directed dropout prevention, afterschool, and early childhood initiatives. Levine is a frequent adviser to the White House, the U.S. Department of Education, PBS, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Rafi Santo is an educator, researcher, technologist and activist currently pursuing his doctorate in the learning sciences at Indiana University. His research and professional interests focus on the intersection of new media, educational design, interest driven learning, and online participatory cultures with a particular eye towards how to leverage these areas to create greater equity and democratization in society. He specializes in the design and implementation of digital learning projects and in understanding innovation in the education sector.

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Nicholas C. Donohue
President and CEO, Nellie Mae
Education Foundation

The Promise of Extended Learning Opportunities: New, Powerful, and Personalized Options for High School Students

As we prepare our communities and our nation for a future that is increasingly complex and global, our education system—a relic of a bygone era—must shift dramatically to ensure that all of our citizens can thrive in the 21st century. New models are emerging that may help move our educational system from the “one-size-fits-all” practice we have known it to be, to a design that might well be described as an orchestra. This image of a well-tuned and aligned orchestra conjures up notions of coordination, variety, and harmony—with many parts of the system “in concert” with each other.

One model that is showing particular promise in this regard provides high school students with access to well-facilitated, high-quality, real-world experiences in which they can acquire essential, complex skills and knowledge by studying, collaborating, and doing.

A case in point: Andy is a high school student with an interest in exploring a career in health care. He spent some of his school year in an internship under the guidance of an infection control nurse on-site at a regional medical center, learning how diseases spread and what to do about it. As part of his “coursework,” Andy helped design, organize, manage, and analyze results from a study on hand washing as a way of limiting contagion. The study consisted of close observations of doctors, nurses, and staff and the development of an original benchmarking system to monitor the effectiveness of hand-sanitizing stations within the facility.

With guidance from teachers and an on-site mentor, Andy gathered, synthesized, analyzed, and compared his local data to Centers for Disease Control (CDC) data and then developed a set of findings. He then presented his research to the medical center's Infection Control Board—staffed by certified experts in the field.

This would be an exciting opportunity for a college student, let alone someone in high school. What makes it even more valuable is that it is credit-bearing. With the support of rigorous assessment processes, students like Andy can now have these powerful experiences while doing something that “counts” in addition to, and in some cases instead of, time spent sitting—and mostly listening—in a classroom. In Andy's own words, “I think this was a very powerful learning experience. I practiced a lot of working skills... including my presentation skills...self-direction and critical thinking... (and) graphing and map skills. This internship really brought my learning together.”

In addition to Andy's own obvious appreciation of this kind of learning experience, evaluation and research findings validate that these kinds of efforts are worthy and feasible. New research from neuroscience suggests that these types of engaging experiences contribute to the ongoing development of the brain and a literal strengthening of its synapses. Contrary to earlier notions that significant brain development is limited to the preschool years, we now know that the very nature of learning activities themselves as we experience them throughout our lives—their complexity, their relevance, their vitality—have a positive result on exercising and strengthening our brains in ways that help us do similar tasks. Doing, it turns out, helps prepare us to do better (Hinton, Fischer, & Glennon, 2012).

Youth development research also reminds us that the higher the relevance and interest quotients, the stronger the motivation. We know that tapping learner motivation is a key to persistence and success. Combining classroom instruction with hands-on learning experiences facilitated by community mentors gives us another way of aligning education with what we know about young people and how they learn best (Halpern, 2012).

More good news is that the kinds of skills and knowledge that are developed through these complex, applied real-world experiences are consistent with what employers want and what global competition demands. “Organize, research, analyze, synthesize, write, and present are all words that describe the challenges of Andy's work. These are not ‘soft skills’; they make up the ‘new basics’ to which we must attend if we are to adequately prepare our society for the future” (Rennie Center, 2010).

The evaluation of this type of learning opportunity tells us that Andy and his peers enjoy this kind of learning and want more of it. Teachers, while challenged at first, will eventually embrace these approaches with the right support. Designing and delivering real-world learning with community mentors allows teachers to tap their own creative juices by developing learning opportunities, demonstrating their expertise about content, and exercising their professional judgment concerning performance. Evaluation also tells us that the credits earned are worthy in terms of the strength of learning they represent (Zuliani & Ellis, 2011).

Evaluation results also point to the many challenges that come with this work. Teaching in a classroom is hard enough; developing criteria for a credit-worthy experience in a real-world setting and setting the thresholds that signify proficiency are even more difficult—particularly since most educators who are currently in the workforce were not trained for such 21st century experiences (Zuliani & Ellis, 2011).

While we refer to the type of expanded learning opportunities described above as “ELOs,” they link teachers and community mentors more intensively and are often much more robust and engaging than other programs that use the same term. As effective and supportive as the ELO efforts described here are, they currently only exist in small patches across the country. However, there are many possibilities for enriching the way we currently extend learning through creating and strengthening school-community partnerships and simultaneously deploying teachers and hands-on-learning with mentors.

How do we bring such efforts to scale so that ELOs are not just high quality add-ons to traditional school practices, but so they find their way to eventually defining educational practices more fully? What are the barriers to doing so? Seat-time requirements known as “Carnegie Units” may stand in the way of making ELOs a creditable norm. High stakes assessment rarely focus on the complex skills and knowledge that define high quality ELOs. If dollars follow the learner instead of supporting the classroom directly, will school budgets shrink even further? The public policy and practice challenges are daunting. Yet the political, educational, cultural, and economic tides may be turning in the direction of these ELO-like approaches.

The advent of the Common Core State Standards—a nearly universally adopted set of learning standards in the United States—is a step forward for those who seek a greater and better focus on complex skills and knowledge within applied settings. The development of next-generation assessments will also allow for more performance information than bubble filling provides. While far from perfect, these two improving aspects of standards and assessment—more amenable outcomes and better measures—are more aligned with what ELOs need to be successful.

From an economic vantage point, school is not getting any cheaper and the window is wide open for more cost-effective approaches to learning. While ELOs at scale have costs associated with them, the returns on investment in terms of retention, lower drop-out rates, and levels of skill attainment make them an attractive option to educators and taxpayers.

Culturally, technology is bringing such terms as customization and personalization into our social and business lexicon. Witness the advent of the PC, playlists, Amazon.com, Netflix, and the ubiquitous smartphone. In education, this wave of change has resulted in an explosion of tech-driven educational opportunities that is accelerating as fast as the appetite of younger, tech-savvy educators for modern ways of teaching. The burgeoning field of K–12 online learning that now defines some of our nation’s largest stand-alone “school districts” is proof of technology’s impact. How long will it be before modularization of educational opportunities gathers steam and squeezes out traditional school designs, much as iTunes has replaced CDs and record albums?

These exciting developments reinforce the notion that we are fast moving to a time when educators, parents, guardians, and/or students will be able to package learning based on need and interest—if they can afford it. If the attractiveness and quality of ELOs continue to grow, these inventive approaches will find learners who want to prepare for their future and who will stay authentically engaged as they do so.

The opportunity for out-of-school-time, afterschool, summer learning, and extended- learning time providers is enormous; however, infighting currently defines much of this relationship. Maybe it is time to call a truce in the name of survival—or even move to a self-interested collaboration.

Leaders in these various movements could, for example, work together to design new types of learning modules and other learning opportunities that could be used in a variety of settings beyond the school day and school year. They could also work together to advocate for enhanced public funding to support ELOs, including freeing up funds that support existing federal programs (like Title I) so that ELOs are an allowable expenditure; enlarging the funding pool from the state (for example, creating a state innovation fund for credit-worthy expanded learning time); or increasing federal sources (for example, increasing the 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding).

One way forward in terms of deep collaboration is modeled in New Hampshire. As part of the evolution of ELOs in the Granite State, Learning Studios (developed through a partnership with the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future) are sprouting up, staffed jointly by teachers and afterschool providers. In these labs, students engage in real-world challenges in workplace settings.

At one Learning Lab, managed by Lebanon High School in the middle of the state, students identify problems to solve, make a plan to solve the problems, enlist community experts, identify specific learning outcomes that align with academic standards, and then execute their plan. Their projects, presentation, and videos are screened and discussed. The effort is linked to the emergence of new school accountability designs so the work “counts” and credits may be awarded.

Bullying, student-teacher relationships, and academic favoritism are some of the topics chosen by students. Researching, writing, collaborating, and making a solid argument are some of the student outcomes that are assessed.

This year in Providence, Rhode Island, 35 students have been actively engaged in a pilot initiative off-campus that involves a community-based ELO connected with the Providence Public Schools’ (PPS) Juanita Sanchez Educational Complex. The management structure of this effort is a model for inter-sector collaboration, with some interesting implications for how all sides think about available funds. As part of the

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pilot process, the director of the school's 21st Century Community Learning Center has worked closely with the Providence After School Alliance, or PASA (a long standing community entity that coordinates out-of-school-time work in the city), and school staff who have been coordinating and advancing the ELO initiative with students, faculty, and community partners.

The center director considers ELOs to be a connected part of the center's program at the school and has helped recruit students to take part in the ELO pilot. For the coming school year, the director has asked PASA to provide technical assistance to other 21st Century Community Learning Centers program providers to help guide them on developing eligible, standards-aligned programs that PPS could approve to be future credit-bearing ELOs. Additionally, the center director is encouraging programs from the ELO pilot to apply for grant funding through the existing pool of federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers funds in order to further connect the ELO initiative with the school's effort.

The director of expanded learning, who works jointly at PASA and PPS, has been working with district leadership to plan an expansion of the ELO initiative to other schools, in which the relationship with 21st Century Community Learning Centers will again be a hallmark of the initiative. PASA and PPS view these federal resources as part of a braided funding strategy, along with federal Title I, School Improvement Grants, and private funding, to support community-based staff who lead ELOs. These community partnerships are an essential component of the high school ELO work in Providence.

Furthermore, the collaborative work of the Providence out-of-school-time community already connects a number of high quality 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs and providers serving high school youth. In addition to the Juanita Sanchez Educational Complex program, many of the providers—including many of the 12 who are part of the ELO pilot—also provide programming through 21st Century Community Learning Centers structures at other high schools. This cross-fertilization of programs through this network will allow for an easier and faster replication of the ELO strategy at the new partner high schools in the coming academic year.

These and other stories tell us that there are more than enough opportunities, intelligence, experience, and talent to move ahead to collaborative work on a new learning ecosystem. 21st Century Community Learning Centers providers have a long, solid history of responding to market demands. Those programs serving high school students could right now begin to provide more high quality, real-world learning that links creative teachers and community mentors. School folks have long experience with standards and higher stakes assessments. Their leadership in meeting the challenges of the Common Core would be invaluable.

... there are more than enough opportunities, intelligence, experience, and talent to move ahead to collaborative work on a new learning ecosystem.

Why not work together on the development of rigorous, interesting, and credit-worthy ELOs? As the location and time for learning becomes more varied, we should develop high quality ELOs that “blend” virtual experiences with rich student/teacher/mentor relationships. In these and many other ways, ELO designs become better, and natural allies find common ground.

The only thing standing in the way of a potentially historic collaboration is the deep commitment on both sides to sustaining themselves; however, in a wired, hyper-connected, ever-changing world, a joint reinvention for these education sectors is absolutely necessary. So, instead of modeling the losing battle between newspapers and magazines fighting for disappearing “eye-balls,” these educational players could be more like fierce collaborators developing our education industry’s “new media,” finding ways to keep the customer engaged—and willing to pay.

The opportunity to move into this new learning time and space is enormous for the range of groups working on expanding learning, afterschool programs, summer initiatives, and out-of-school-time efforts by extending real-life learning through school-community partnerships. ELO work provides a true “sweet spot” for collaboration and learning from each other. Partners can develop low-cost, sustainable options that engage struggling students and better connect real-world, hands-on learning in the community with modern educational expectations. Such efforts can also involve families more in their students’ successes.

The risks are considerable, but the rewards and opportunities are far greater. Just ask Andy and his peers.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nicholas C. Donohue, president and CEO of the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, is leading efforts to reshape New England’s public education systems to be more equitable and more effective for all learners. Previously, Donohue was a special master at Hope High School in Providence, where he oversaw implementation of the Rhode Island Commissioner of Education’s order to reconstitute the school. Before his tenure at Hope High School, Donohue was commissioner of education in New Hampshire.

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Lucy N. Friedman
President, TASC

Reinventing the Learning Day: How ExpandedED Schools Blend the Best of School and Afterschool Through Community Partnerships

The traditional school calendar was designed for life a century ago, when Americans could thrive and be successful without even earning a high school degree. Today disadvantaged students, and those who are poorly served by conventional public schools, need better learning opportunities—and more of them—that capitalize on the best assets of their schools, communities, and families. By partnering with community organizations, schools can give students more time and a wider range of opportunities to learn by broadening school faculty to include a mix of certified teachers, teaching artists, and role models such as AmeriCorps members. We can help 21st century learners prepare to succeed in the information age by using more learning hours to engage, support, and challenge all students more effectively.

ExpandedED Schools offer at least 35% more learning time at 10% of the cost of the school day.

ExpandedED Schools, developed by TASC, offer a promising model for educators and communities to reinvent the learning day. The model incorporates research-based practices that have been found effective in improving students' school attendance, attitudes and achievement. Each school partners with an experienced youth-serving community organization to expand the conventional school day by approximately 3 hours to match parents' working hours. By partnering with their communities, schools can draw on a blend of education and youth development funds. This is

a cost-effective way to expand learning opportunities, even in difficult economic times. In fact, ExpandedED Schools offer at least 35% more learning time at 10% of the cost of the school day. Families are valued partners in establishing a shared vision for student success and planning the redesign of their schools.

This article will lay out the rationale for this approach, provide examples of effective practices within TASC's ExpandedED Schools national demonstration project, and offer resources for getting started.

Rationale

Starting in 2008, TASC supported a pilot of the ExpandedED Schools model (formerly called Expanded Learning Time/New York City) that grew over 3 years to include 17 New York City public elementary and middle schools. This informed the design of a subsequent 3-year national demonstration of 11 ExpandedED Schools currently operating in New York, Baltimore, and New Orleans. This initiative builds on the broad evidence base of effective afterschool programs and successful charter schools in order to offer an active, balanced learning day.

TASC afterschool programs get positive results. TASC developed a quality model for school-based afterschool programs that are operated by a community partner, such as a YMCA or community development corporation. Programs are designed to serve hundreds of children in a school and offer a variety of enriching activities.

From the beginning, in 1998, TASC encouraged parents to get involved. TASC staff quickly discovered that a child's afterschool program was a natural entry-point to a school for parents. Parents could communicate with afterschool staff during dismissal about their child's progress. Many afterschool programs encouraged parents to volunteer, to participate in parent-and-child literacy and science events, and to join in parent workshops. In collaboration with the New York State Afterschool Network, TASC developed an afterschool quality checklist for parents.

Research has shown that TASC afterschool programs increase student achievement and school attendance and improve students' likelihood of high school graduation. (Russell, Mielke, Miller, & Johnson, 2007; Reisner, White, Russell, & Birmingham, 2004). In particular, Reisner et al. (2004) conducted a large-scale, longitudinal evaluation of TASC-model programs. The results revealed that participants had greater gains in their math standardized scores and maintained a higher rate of school attendance than nonparticipating peers. Middle school participants had significantly higher attendance rates in the ninth and tenth grades (Reisner et al., 2004). Researchers also found that length of time enrolled in TASC programs and number of days attended were significant correlates of educational outcomes (Reisner et al., 2004). Students who were eligible for free lunch, English language learners, and special education students who attended TASC programs regularly performed significantly better on math standardized scores than matched nonparticipants. In addition, highly engaged black and Hispanic participants showed greater gains over nonparticipants than did white and Asian participants in math achievement. Overall, students who participated in TASC-model programming for at least 2 years and attended at least 60 days of programming experienced the greatest gains on math standardized test scores relative to matched

nonparticipants. Together, these findings provide evidence that TASC programs helped to close the achievement gap between students of high and low socioeconomic status and between students of different racial groups in New York City (Reisner et al., 2004).

Thousands of children and youth continue to be served by the TASC afterschool programs. TASC provides schools and community partners with technical assistance and professional development to support continuous improvement.

ExpandedED schools offer a new learning model with community partners. TASC began testing a school-improvement model in 2008 in New York City elementary and middle schools. The goal of the 3-year pilot was to build partnerships between schools and community organizations to provide all students with a well-rounded education that would help them grow into adults who can innovate, create, and think for a living. The pilot schools incorporated into expanded school days the best of what afterschool programs have to offer, including the adult mentorship of community educators who fortify students against the stresses and hardships of poverty. They differed from schools with afterschool programs by treating the hours between the time students arrived and roughly 6:00 p.m. as one unified learning day. They encouraged teachers and their partners to set goals jointly and build curriculum and activities around each individual school community's needs and student and family interests.

Pilot schools innovated in several ways, including

- *teaming teachers with artists to integrate arts into other academic subjects;*
- *having AmeriCorps members do small-group academic interventions with students before 3:00 p.m. and lead enrichments afterwards; and*
- *offering joint planning time and professional development for teachers and community educators.*

Close examination of the impact of these reform elements in schools prepared TASC for the next phase of work—a more ambitious, fully-integrated national demonstration of what can be achieved with more time, balanced curricula, an expanded school labor pool, and the coordination of education and youth development funding streams. Now, in 11 ExpandedED Schools, partners are customizing additional learning time and opportunities to the needs of their students.

All ExpandedED Schools embrace these four core elements: (1) more time for balanced learning, (2) school-community partnerships, (3) engaging and personalized instruction, and (4) a sustainable cost model of \$1,600 per student at scale. The model is designed to serve whole schools, with the potential of phase-ins through whole grades.

Parents play a crucial role. For example, if a neighborhood lacks safe spaces for children to play outdoors, parents can advocate for devoting time and resources to rigorous physical activity. Parent involvement is an ongoing process. Schools survey parents and students throughout the year and use their feedback to adapt staffing and curriculum.

Evidence

TASC contracted Policy Studies Associates and Abt Associates to conduct an evaluation of its 3-year pilot of TASC Expanded Learning Time/New York City. The study found that 85% of teachers reported that the expanded time had improved participants' learning, and 67% of teachers reported that nonparticipants gained from the presence of expanded learning in the school. Schools also increased fidelity to the model over the course of the pilot. Higher fidelity schools demonstrated greater student outcomes. In schools implementing the model with high fidelity, there was a positive and statistically significant effect of expanded learning time on math achievement in Year 3 and attendance in all 3 years (Policy Studies Associates & Abt Associates, 2012).

Additionally, these schools outperformed their city peers on New York State English language arts and math exams. The two schools that implemented the model with the greatest fidelity (including offering the program to all students by Year 3) produced impressive results. At Young Scholars' Academy for Discovery and Exploration, which partners with University Settlement (a New York City settlement house), the percentage of third, fourth, and fifth graders achieving proficiency increased by 26 percentage points in English language arts between 2009–10 and 2010–11, compared to 3.3 percentage points citywide, and 17.3 percentage points in math,

compared to 2.6 percentage points citywide. At Thurgood Marshall Academy Lower School, which partners with Abyssinian Development Corporation, the percentage of students in grades 3–5 achieving proficiency increased by 13.1 percentage points in English language arts, compared to 3.3 percentage points citywide, and by 18.5 percentage points in math, compared to 2.6 percentage points citywide (NYC Department of Education, 2012).

According to parent surveys in 2010–11, 93% of parents at Thurgood Marshall Academy and 96% at Young Scholars' Academy agreed their child's school offers a wide enough variety of courses and activities to keep them interested, compared to 84% of parents citywide. The survey also found that 96% of parents at Thurgood Marshall Academy and 97% at Young Scholars' Academy agreed their child was learning what he or she needed to succeed, compared to 91% citywide (NYC Department of Education, 2011).

85% of teachers reported that the expanded time had improved participants' learning, and 67% of teachers reported that nonparticipants gained from the presence of expanded learning in the school.

ExpandED Schools Success Stories

The most successful partnerships team teachers with community educators in classrooms before and after 3:00 p.m.

- The principal at PS 188 in Lower Manhattan was concerned that social studies was getting squeezed out of the regular school day schedule. Teachers now collaborate with teaching artists hired through Educational Alliance, the school's community partner, to explore social studies through the arts in the expanded day. Together they deliver a rich curriculum that incorporates art forms such as drama and painting. As an example, fifth grade students who were studying government worked with a drama coach to stage mock elections.
- Fannie C. Williams, a K–8 school in New Orleans, re-opened 2 years after Hurricane Katrina. The school partners with Vietnamese Initiatives in Economic Training (VIET) to expand the learning day. Teachers and community educators continuously share data to identify students struggling with reading and math and target them for small group interventions. VIET community educators lead students in targeted skill-building activities.
- Strong collaboration is also evident at Young Scholars' Academy. When Principal Danika LaCroix was assigned to reconstitute a failing Brooklyn elementary school, she vowed to give her students as rigorous and broad an education as children get in more affluent neighborhoods. The school divided 3 extra hours among intensive math, English, and enrichment experiences chosen by students and parents, including dance and robotics. While community staff members work alongside teachers with small groups of students who need intensive instruction in math and literacy, students who are more advanced do homework with help from community staff.

Recommendations

- *School districts or schools and community organizations that are interested in expanding learning time and opportunities should start by assessing their readiness. Learnings from quality afterschool programs and strong community-school partnerships should inform their efforts.*
- *Schools that are considering more time as a turnaround strategy should partner with strong community organizations. By blending their resources and coalescing as teams, they can educate the whole child at a cost public funding can sustain. Schools and their community partners should involve families in school redesign and ongoing feedback to sustain progress.*
- *When thinking about increasing learning time, schools and their partners should assess gaps in the curriculum and identify student interests in order to ensure a well-rounded curriculum that deeply engages students and leads to higher achievement. More time will neither yield better results nor engage students more deeply unless it is used well.*
- *Schools should consider expanding the learning day to 5:30 or 6:00 p.m. to match parents' working hours and give students a third meal.*
- *Schools should track students' progress in attendance, grades, and behavior as well as academic achievement. Students who are chronically absent, fail math or science, or have significant behavior problems during the elementary and middle grades are at highest risk for dropping out of high school.*

For More Information

www.expandedschools.org

Is Your District Ready to ExpandED? A System-Level Readiness Tool

This tool was designed for school districts, cities, and intermediaries to assess their readiness to implement the core elements of ExpandedED Schools. A school-level tool is also available.

Three Ways to Expand Learning

These schedules show how ExpandedED Schools in Baltimore, New Orleans and New York City have re-engineered time and resources to an expanded school day.

A Fiscal Map for Expanded Learning Time (ELT)

TASC developed this fiscal map, analysis, and set of policy recommendations in an effort to (1) show how many sources of funding schools and community partners can bring to expanded learning approaches—29 at the federal level alone—and (2) highlight for policymakers who control one or more of these funding streams just how complex this picture is.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lucy N. Friedman is the founding president of TASC, a nonprofit organization dedicated to giving all kids expanded learning opportunities that support, educate, and inspire them. Under her leadership, TASC has helped 442,000 kids, supported 528 public schools, partnered with 369 community and cultural organizations and colleges, and trained 21,000 community members to work in schools. She holds leadership positions in organizations including the Afterschool Alliance, the Coalition for Science After School, the New York State Afterschool Network, and the Collaborative for Building After-School Systems.

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Anita Krishnamurthi

Director of STEM Policy, Afterschool Alliance

Ron Ottinger

Executive Director, Noyce Foundation

Tessie Topol

Senior Director for Strategic Philanthropy & Community Affairs, Time Warner Cable

STEM Learning in Afterschool and Summer Programming: An Essential Strategy for STEM Education Reform

Science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills are increasingly necessary to navigate an ever-more complex world and a globalized economy. There is tremendous energy and momentum to improve these skills among our citizens and students so they can participate fully in contemporary society and the modern economy.

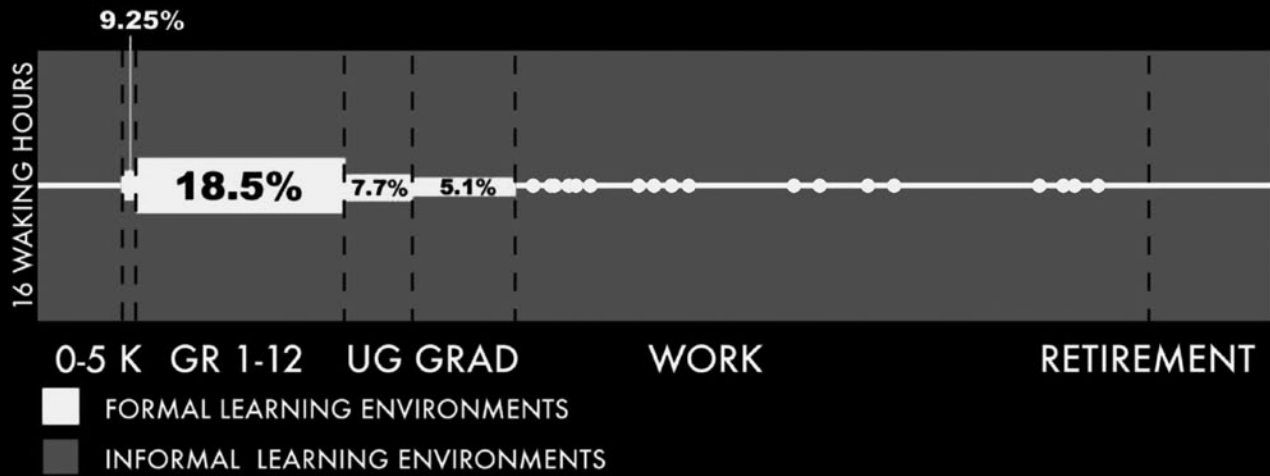
Afterschool and summer programs all over the United States are offering engaging, hands-on STEM learning programs that are not only getting children excited about these topics, but also are helping them build some real-life skills and proficiencies.

Yet most strategies and policies for reforming STEM education focus on what happens during the school day. While schools are absolutely essential for learning, we must acknowledge that children spend less than 20% of their waking hours in schools each year, and some persuasively argue that school is not where most Americans learn most of their science anyway (Falk & Dierkling, 2010).

Hence, efforts to improve and increase STEM education opportunities must include programs that take place during the afterschool hours and the summer. Despite the need for many more quality afterschool and summer programs, more than 8 million young people already attend afterschool programs (Afterschool Alliance, 2009).

In addition, there is a sizeable infrastructure of programming and support (for example, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative and the California Afterschool and Safety Program) focused especially on serving young people from groups that are typically

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under-represented in the STEM fields. This is a large and growing field that local, state, and national education and business leaders and policy makers interested in STEM and K–12 education reform should pay attention to.

Afterschool and summer programs all over the United States are offering engaging, hands-on STEM learning programs that are not only getting children excited about these topics, but are also helping them build some real-life skills and proficiencies. There is mounting evidence that demonstrates the impact of these settings. A recent analysis of evaluation studies of several afterschool STEM programs showed that high quality programs can lead to increased interest and improved attitudes toward STEM fields and careers, increased STEM knowledge and skills, and increased likelihood of pursuing STEM majors and careers (Afterschool Alliance, 2011b).

Evidence of STEM Benefits from Afterschool

- **4-H** (nationwide) – 71% of 4-H science participants say science is now one of their favorite subjects, and 59% say they would like to have a job in a science field.
- **ACE Mentor Program** (nationwide) – 66% of program alumni (mostly from minority communities) are studying Architecture, Construction, or Engineering or working in one of these fields.
- **FIRST** (nationwide) – Participants learn a wide variety of skills, ranging from technical to teamwork and presentation skills, in this program focused on robotics. 89% of alumni go on to college.
- **TechBridge** (Oakland, CA) – This girls-only program enjoys great success, with more than 80% of participants reporting improved problem-solving, computer, and technical skills.

The impact of these types of expanded learning programs and extracurricular activities is also reflected in improvements in academic performance, as noted in the research cited by many other authors in this compendium. Other recent research also reveals the importance of out-of-school-time settings for STEM education. Tai, Liu, Maltese, and Fan (2006) found, for example, that early engagement with STEM fields was crucial and that a professed interest in STEM careers by eighth grade was a more accurate predictor of getting a science-related college degree than were the math or science test scores for average students. Thus, early encouragement of elementary and middle school students in STEM fields can be very effective in influencing their choice of college majors. Additionally, Wai, Lubinski, Benbow, and Steiger (2010) found that students who had more opportunities to participate in STEM learning (including beyond the classroom) were more likely to follow STEM career pathways and excel in them.

Afterschool programs are well placed to deliver on these needs by not only providing additional time to engage in STEM topics but also by doing so in a manner that is different from school and that engages different types of learners. These programs can also be very effective in improving access to STEM fields and careers among populations that are currently greatly underrepresented – women, African Americans, and Hispanics (Beede et al., 2011a; Beede et al., 2011b)—helped in part by the fact that African American and Hispanic children participate in afterschool programs in greater numbers (Afterschool Alliance, 2009).

Promising Trends in Afterschool STEM Learning

Afterschool programs are no strangers to STEM programming. STEM-rich institutions, such as museums and universities, as well as youth groups such as 4-H, Girls Inc., Girl Scouts, etc., that have deep roots in their communities, have been offering afterschool STEM programs for many decades. What has changed in the past decade is that they have renewed and deepened their commitment and that the average afterschool provider has also become interested in offering such opportunities to the children they serve. The only federal funding source exclusively dedicated to afterschool and summer learning programming, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, is now emphasizing STEM as a priority area for its grantees. Indeed, the importance of this key funding source cannot be overstated, as it is essential for providing the basic programs and infrastructure that many other STEM-focused partners can tap into to expand learning opportunities for students.

Funding from this federal initiative has significantly leveraged additional resources for STEM programming. For example, the Noyce Foundation is a private philanthropic foundation that invests heavily in afterschool STEM learning through innovative partnerships. A C. S. Mott Foundation-Noyce Foundation collaboration currently is active in 16 states and will continue to expand among the nation's growing number of state afterschool networks, which are supported by the Mott Foundation. Also Noyce is investing in "Project LIFTOFF," an initiative to develop and nurture afterschool STEM systems in 10 Midwestern states. This initiative has led many school districts to combine their foundation funding with their 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding to offer exceptionally high quality afterschool STEM opportunities.

In 2011, the Nebraska 21st Century Community Learning Centers program received a NASA Summer of Innovation grant to launch Nebraska BLAST! This is a 4-year collaborative initiative that brings together STEM content specialists with teachers and

afterschool staff from schools that receive funding through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative. This effort will provide high quality STEM training to staff of all of Nebraska's 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs and will give thousands of Nebraska youth the opportunity to engage in exciting, hands-on STEM experiences through their local program.

As schools, communities, and parents negotiate how to provide additional learning opportunities for their children and youth, afterschool and summer programs that work closely with schools provide a model to meet this need. Research shows that afterschool programs that are well aligned with the school day and have strong community ties have optimal benefits for kids (Afterschool Alliance, 2011a).

The corporate sector is also getting deeply involved in afterschool STEM education. Change the Equation is a nonprofit organization that was formed to help companies with their STEM education-related philanthropy. Most of the philanthropic investments of these companies focus on the "informal education" arena, which includes afterschool.

Nebraska BLAST! will provide high quality STEM training to staff of all of Nebraska's 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs and will give thousands of Nebraska youth the opportunity to engage in exciting, hands-on STEM experiences.

For example, in 2009, Time Warner Cable (TWC) decided to focus the majority of its philanthropic resources on a single cause. The result was Connect a Million Minds (CAMM)—a 5-year, \$100 million cash and in-kind commitment to inspire students to engage in math and science learning. To bring this commitment to life, TWC supports *FIRST* (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology), a robotics organization with a model proven to engage young people in STEM learning also funded by 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs in areas across the country. On a national level, TWC also partners with the Coalition for Science After School to provide the "Connectory," a free, online resource that makes it easy for parents and teachers to find informal STEM learning opportunities. In addition, TWC brings the impact of CAMM to its local markets by supporting *FIRST* teams and competitions, science museums, and other nonprofit organizations that are engaging kids in STEM.

Several *FIRST* teams have also utilized 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding with great success. The Camdenton R-III Afterschool Science, Engineering and Robotics program in rural Missouri receives funding from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative and has leveraged that to great effect. Their team has won several awards, including the regional competition that has

allowed them to go to the finals for 2 years in a row. The Safe Harbor Before and After School Program in Michigan City, Indiana, which has received 21st Century Community Learning Centers funds for many years, worked with the Indiana Afterschool Network and the Indiana Department of Education to develop a *FIRST* Robotics team in 2012. The team won the All Star Rookie award in the Midwest and went to the national championship.

Recommendations

It is becoming clear that there is a great need—and a prime opportunity—to tap the potential of afterschool and summer learning programs to serve an urgent national priority to enhance STEM education. Deliberate action by all key stakeholders is required, however, to help afterschool and summer programs fully realize this potential and become strategic—and integral—partners in STEM education.

Federal and state education policies must ensure, in particular, that afterschool and summer programs are included in STEM education policy initiatives if this to become a sustainable, long-term practice (Krishnamurthi, 2012; Afterschool Alliance, 2012).

In addition, the afterschool field must also adopt several strategies to become effective partners in STEM education:

- *Afterschool programs must deliberately commit to offering STEM learning opportunities and then prioritize and allocate resources to provide professional development in STEM programming areas to staff.*
- *Afterschool intermediary organizations and large networks must widely promote existing high quality curricula to avoid wasting scarce resources on developing new programs and curricula.*
- *The field must reach consensus around youth outcome indicators and adopt them widely so that programs have a clear vision of their goals and role within the STEM education ecosystem. A local- or state-level hub is often a necessity for disseminating information and coordinating professional development efforts and other STEM programming needs for afterschool. This may include seeking partnerships with STEM-rich institutions, such as science museums and universities, as well as other science and math hubs in many states.*
- *Meaningful STEM learning that extends beyond one-shot experiences are necessary. Afterschool and summer programs must pay close attention to offering regular, consistent programming in STEM topics. Furthermore, wherever possible, programs must offer a continuum of STEM learning experiences that extend into middle and high school in order to derive maximum impact from their STEM programming.*

Employers and professionals in STEM fields who would like to engage in afterschool programs might find it helpful to familiarize themselves with the landscape of afterschool STEM in their region before getting started. As with any new community, the afterschool field has its own culture and philosophy, and it is important to be aware of the issues before delving into it.

- *A good place to start is to seek out the Mott-funded statewide afterschool network in the state, the national Afterschool Alliance, the local afterschool consortium, or the National Girls Collaborative Project and other similar networks to find out about existing efforts and partnership needs.*

- *Large afterschool providers, such as local and state 21st Century Learning Centers programs, 4-H, Boys and Girls Clubs, Girls Inc., the YMCA, as well as afterschool coordinators within school districts, are all good places to get started at a local level.*
- *Additionally, businesses wishing to get involved in supporting afterschool and summer STEM programming might find the guidelines suggested by Change the Equation in their “Design Principles for Effective Philanthropy” (n.d.) useful. Public-private partnerships could also greatly advance the systems-building effort required to support STEM learning in afterschool by focusing on content-related professional development, evaluation studies, and other technical assistance. An example of such a public-private partnership is that between the Mott Foundation and the Department of Education around the 21st Century Community Learning Centers. Recently, the Noyce Foundation has partnered with the Mott Foundation to support some of the Statewide Afterschool Networks in their STEM efforts, further leveraging the investments. Many other partnership opportunities are available with the state afterschool networks and local and state 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs.*

Afterschool and summers programs have emerged as essential partners in improving and increasing STEM education opportunities for our children and youth. They are often overlooked but have a big and growing infrastructure and interest in STEM. Your involvement and leadership is needed to capitalize on it.

For More Information

- **Afterschool Alliance** – <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/STEM> - This website provides information on resources for programs as well as ways for STEM professionals to get involved in afterschool.
- **Coalition for Science After School** – <http://afterschoolscience.org/> - This organization has several resources, including a guide to science activities and curricula (look under the Program Resources tab).
- **Connect a Million Minds Connectory** – <http://connectamillionminds.com/connectory.php> - This resource allows you to search by zip code for activities and resources for afterschool programs.
- **Statewide Afterschool Networks** – <http://www.statewideafterschoolnetworks.net/> - The Statewide Afterschool Networks work with a broad range of partners to foster partnerships and policies to develop, support and sustain high quality afterschool and expanded learning opportunities for children and youth.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Anita Krishnamurthi is director of STEM policy at the Afterschool Alliance. She leads the Alliance's efforts to advance policies, research, and partnerships so children and youth can have rich STEM education experiences in their afterschool programs. She worked at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) for 6 years. Before joining NASA, Anita was a program officer at the National Academy of Sciences. Anita's formal training is as an astrophysicist,

Ron Ottinger is the executive director of the Noyce Foundation and is leading the foundation's initiatives in informal and out-of-school-time science, focusing on field-building efforts that are marrying afterschool and science. These efforts include strategies to scale quality out-of-school science programming nationally within the Mott State Afterschool Networks, the urban Collaborative for Building After School Systems, 4-H, the Afterschool Alliance, National Afterschool Association, and National Summer Learning Association.

Tessie Topol is senior director for strategic philanthropy & community affairs at Time Warner Cable. In this role, she is responsible for the company's community giving and engagement strategy and leads its signature philanthropy program, Connect a Million Minds™, a 5-year, \$100 million cash and in-kind initiative to inspire the next generation of STEM innovators.

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Alexis Menten

Director, Afterschool and Youth Leadership
Initiatives, Asia Society

Evie Hantzopoulos

Executive Director, Global Kids

Learning for a Complex World: Expanding Global Learning in Afterschool and Summers

Leaders in the afterschool and summer learning fields are increasingly in agreement on a single, fundamental belief: High quality afterschool and summer programs should focus on providing what young people need to be successful in school and in life. Exemplary programs seek to fill the gaps between school, community, and home in ways that not only keep kids on track, but also help them get ahead and become contributing members of society. Furthermore, the type of learning provided by high quality afterschool and summer learning programs is designed to be hands-on, experiential learning that engages youth in personally meaningful topics and pursuits while simultaneously reinforcing core knowledge and skills. This article will describe how high quality, cutting-edge programs can incorporate all of these core principles and strategies and, in addition, do it within a *global learning framework*, thereby providing enhanced relevance and meaning for youth in our rapidly changing world.

When considering what young people need to be successful in both college and career, those in the business community (Committee for Economic Development, 2006; New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, 2008) and the higher education community (Reimers, 2006; Reimers, 2009) alike emphasize that knowledge of the wider world, the skills to innovate and navigate in multiple contexts, and the dispositions to make a positive impact are critical. The complex mix of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that makes up *global competence* is no longer only required for specific university majors or certain careers—and it can no longer be for elite students only. Global competence is critical for all students, from all backgrounds, to be able to collaborate and compete effectively in the global 21st century (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Building global competence is an especially powerful tool for broadening students' skill sets, interests, and capacity for learning, especially in underserved and marginalized communities.

Building global competence is an especially powerful tool for broadening students' skill sets, interests, and capacity for learning, especially in underserved and marginalized communities.

By using the world as a context for learning, afterschool and summer programs can help youth explore meaningful and relevant content while developing the academic skills and other competencies they need to succeed as citizens of the 21st century. The process by which young people develop global competence needs to become an essential approach for all education programs, both in school and out of school. Global learning provides the opportunity for experiential, interdisciplinary learning that deeply engages youth and that more tightly links schools, communities, and families around a focus on global issues and topics that have local and personal connections.

Defining Global Competence

The Council of Chief State School Officers recently partnered with the Asia Society to convene a national task force that defined global competence as *the capacity and disposition to understand and act on issues of global significance*. Globally competent students are able to:

- 1. Investigate the world** beyond their immediate environment, framing significant problems and conducting well-crafted and age-appropriate research.
- 2. Recognize perspectives**, others' and their own, articulating and explaining such perspectives thoughtfully and respectfully.
- 3. Communicate ideas** effectively with diverse audiences, bridging geographic, linguistic, ideological, and cultural barriers.
- 4. Take action** to improve conditions, viewing themselves as players in the world and participating reflectively (Boix Mansilla & Jackson, 2011).

In the push to focus on standardized tests, however, these four domains of global competence are often addressed as an afterthought, or they are seen as the natural byproduct of a good education. In fact, the types of knowledge and skills required to achieve global competence can be *foundational* to—not simply a result of—disciplinary and interdisciplinary inquiry. In this article, we demonstrate how schools and afterschool programs can integrate global learning as the foundation for a comprehensive approach to crafting curriculum, facilitating instruction, and embedding authentic assessment.

Promising Practices in Global Learning

The four domains of global competence described above provide a ready lens for embedding globally significant content and contexts into afterschool programming. The key is to consider how the global context adds meaning to the knowledge and skills reflected by state standards for student achievement or other learning goals. Rather than treat global competence as an “add-on,” afterschool and in-school educators can use the four domains described above as a framework for student engagement and learning.

In terms of curriculum, global competence has clear implications for the content and topics that educators and students in school and in expanded learning programs choose to explore in the course of teaching and learning. In *Educating for Global Competence*, Boix Mansilla and Jackson (2011) write that globally significant topics generate deep engagement, demonstrate clear local-global connections and visible global significance, and invite genuine disciplinary or interdisciplinary exploration:

Topics can be deemed significant on multiple grounds: breadth, uniqueness, immediacy, consequence, urgency, ethical implications. Some topics matter because they affect a large number of people on the planet (e.g., climate change). Others may be significant because they demand urgent global solutions (e.g., girls' rights to education, global health and security) or because they directly affect students' lives (e.g., migration in local neighborhoods). Clarity about why a topic matters underlies all quality instruction (p. 56).

Classroom teachers and community educators in afterschool and summer programs must consider how best to guide student learning on globally significant topics. As described above, the four domains of global competence expect learners to investigate the world, recognize perspectives, communicate ideas, and take action. This framework is designed to promote engaged and active inquiry and can serve as a guide for structuring instruction that promotes global learning. When applied to significant content and topics, the framework offers a powerful tool for guiding student learning both within and across disciplines.

Clearly, the type of learning that global competence requires cannot be assessed via a simple multiple choice test. Educators can assess student progress and achievement by creating learning opportunities that require students not only to acquire knowledge and skills but also to apply them to complex problems in novel situations. A variety of performance-based assessments, such as presentations, performances, exhibitions, and action projects, provide critical information to the staff about where students are on their journey towards global competence. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, more authentic assessments with real-world audiences motivate repeated practice and drive student engagement towards mastery.

Global Learning in Out-of-School Time

When afterschool programs use global learning as the foundation for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, they are able to connect with school subjects across the disciplines while continuing to ground learning in the core principles of youth development. One outstanding example of how afterschool programs can infuse

When afterschool programs use global learning as the foundation for curriculum, instruction, and assessment, they are able to connect with school subjects across the disciplines while continuing to ground learning in the core principles of youth development.

youth leadership and development principles within a global education and civic engagement curriculum is provided by Global Kids. Global Kids offers a number of globally oriented education programs to youth during the school day, after school, and during the summer at school sites across New York City and Washington, DC, as well as online.

Four key strategies undergird all Global Kids programs: global education, civic engagement, leadership development, and college/career readiness. The curriculum is designed as a series of 1.5- to 2-hour workshops, each focused on a global issue. The workshops incorporate active learning in the form of small-group work, games, role-playing, and the use of media and technology to bring issues to life. The goal is to engage youth participants in interactive activities and ensure they are actively sharing knowledge and discussing and debating the issues at hand. In planning the curriculum, staff members first identify a set of core learning outcomes and competencies, which include content, skills, and experiences. Then taking into account youth input on what they want to learn, Global Kids staff map out a series of themes for the year and assign each theme to a staff member to develop, according to his/her expertise and interest.

Although workshops are the core components of the organization's approach, Global Kids also incorporates field trips, guest speakers, and other elements to help youth engage with critical issues. Youth across all programs are required to take action by developing and implementing substantive peer-education projects—including workshops, movie screenings and discussions, mini-conferences, and educational theater pieces—as well as social action and service projects. A recent youth-driven Global Kids campaign involved local, national, and international engagement on climate change, including the participation of five students at the United Nations Rio +20 Earth Summit in Brazil in June 2012.

Afterschool programs in more rural communities can also take a global approach to connecting youth development with academic achievement. At the Newfound Regional High School in Bristol, New Hampshire, a federally funded 21st Century Community Learning Centers program has become an afterschool International Club that offers students expanded learning opportunities (ELOs) to earn high school credit. The afterschool director works with the teachers to build their capacity to develop student-driven performance assessment tasks connecting global competencies with course competencies. The student-driven International Club decided to lead an international project monthly for the entire school. The students design the project, identifying the competencies they are targeting and the means by which these competencies will be assessed.

The workshops incorporate active learning in the form of small-group work, games, role-playing, and the use of media and technology to bring issues to life.

In Milledgeville, Georgia, the High Achievers Program has incorporated a global learning focus by creating a structure for programming, staffing, and partnerships that would support the development of global competences in youth from age 6 to 18. During this year-round expanded learning program, youth in grades 9–12 learn about different countries and cultures that are linked to current events and that have connections to the United States. These youth participate in the Peace Corps World Wise Schools curriculum and Skype with Peace Corps volunteers living abroad. Students compare what they are learning about global issues with issues that affect them in their community. These youth are then hired to serve as camp counselors for younger students, ages 6–12, who attend global-themed camps held over spring break and during the summer. During the Global Spring Break Camp, high school youth help their younger peers explore a different country each day, while during the Global Summer Camps, students explore a different country each week. The High Achievers Program relies on strong community partnerships for its success. The program works closely with the Georgia College and State University at Milledgeville. College interns gain required experiential learning hours by working with the high school students throughout the year to identify global topics, issues, and examples that the students then research and convert into activities for the spring break and summer camps for younger children. International faculty and students from the college visit the program throughout the year to talk about their native cultures as well.

For More Information

The following websites provide additional resources on global competence and global learning in afterschool programs:

- Expanding Horizons: Developing Global Learning in Out-of-School Time
www.asiasociety.org/expandedlearning
- CCSSO EdSteps Project: Global Competence
<http://edsteps.org/>
- Educating for Global Competence: Preparing Our Youth to Engage the World
<http://asiasociety.org/files/book-globalcompetence.pdf>
- Global Kids
www.globalkids.org

Recommendations for Getting Started

The Asia Society provides technical assistance to afterschool and summer programs across the nation, including many statewide afterschool networks, that are seeking to incorporate a focus on global education. Drawing on its capacity-building work, the Asia Society offers the following recommendations to help afterschool and summer programs consider how best to integrate a global learning approach to help youth become globally competent:

- 1. Form partnerships** with local businesses, nonprofits, and universities, many of which have global connections and resources to help you get started—and can help you spread the word and build local interest and support.
- 2. Create clear learning goals** that combine disciplinary knowledge and skills embedded in state or local student achievement standards with the four domains of global competence: Investigate the World, Recognize Perspectives, Communicate Ideas, and Take Action. See the CCSSO EdSteps website for a matrix of global learning outcomes: http://edsteps.org/CCSSO/DownloadPopUp.aspx?url=SampleWorks/Matrix_Print_Apr8.pdf
- 3. Design curriculum around globally significant topics** that have local and personal connections within your community and student populations. Consider long-term projects as well as the shorter 1–2 hour workshop format that Global Kids employs.
- 4. Foster active and engaged inquiry** by using the four domains of global competence defined by the Asia Society and the CCSSO taskforce to structure student learning.
- 5. Embed authentic assessments** that enable to students to apply and demonstrate their learning through performances for real-world audiences.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Alexis Menten directs Asia Society’s Expanding Horizons initiative, which provides technical assistance and professional development to national, state, and local expanded learning programs and afterschool intermediaries. She also leads the Society’s Proficiency-Based Pathways work, which is implementing a performance-based assessment system for global competence in four high schools in Colorado, Texas, and New Hampshire. Menten joined Asia Society in 2005 after several years in Central Asia and the Middle East.

Evie Hantzopoulos became executive director of Global Kids in 2010, after serving as its director of programs/deputy director since 1996. Over the years, she has helped oversee the development, supervision, and expansion of GK’s global education, youth leadership, and social action programs in New York City and Washington, DC, public schools. She also spearheaded the writing of Teen Action, a service-learning curriculum grounded in GK methodology for the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development. Hantzopoulos is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

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Gigi Antoni
President/CEO, Big Thought

Rickie Nutik
Executive Director, Young Audiences of Louisiana

Amy Rasmussen
Executive Director, Chicago Arts Partnerships
in Education

Reversing Learning Loss Through the Arts in Afterschool and Summers

In the religion of “being-a-kid,” few times are as sacrosanct as the free hours after school and during the summer. Unfortunately for parents, educators and policy makers, it is not an easy task to convince students to put down the PlayStation and focus on learning in their time off—yet the advantages of doing so are widely regarded as critical in determining academic success. Previous studies (e.g., Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2007; Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, & Greathouse, 1996) show that when students, especially those from low-income households, are not provided educational opportunities in the vast amount of time that they are not in the traditional classroom, they lag behind their peers in reading and math and are less likely to graduate from high school.

Nonprofits across the nation have been testing the hypothesis that integrating creative activities like dance, theater, music, and visual arts with core academics in the context of afterschool and summer learning programs not only reverses these troubling trends but actually helps students invest in and seek out learning, motivated by interesting, yet rigorous, educational experiences.

This article describes the academic, social, and societal benefits of creative summer and afterschool programming from the viewpoint of three successful nonprofits: Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE), Young Audiences of Louisiana, and Big Thought in Dallas, Texas. Each emphatically supports the inclusion of enrichment in extended day programs. Collectively, their experiences suggest four foundational principles for more effective afterschool and summer programming.

Why the Arts?

James Catterall (2009) demonstrates that children who participate in the arts succeed academically, socially, and cognitively in his formative longitudinal study, *Doing Good and Doing Well by Doing Arts*. In fact, the students Catterall studied showed marked gains, as compared to their peers, in most behavioral and academic areas when they maintained their involvement in the arts over the years. For most non-arts advocates, this information raises the question *why?*

Creative programs inherently offer unique environments for learning, but in afterschool contexts these benefits are especially pronounced. For instance, students who enter into formal learning with developmental or social obstacles possess the same potential as their peers and often flourish when barriers to learning are minimized or removed. An English language learning student might struggle to complete assignments in language arts or mathematics but can, just like his or her peers, paint a picture of family or master chords on the guitar by watching an instructor. The arts offer an entry point to reintroduce learning as something positive and equitable.

For Young Audiences of Louisiana, executive director Rickie Nutik has observed that students who feel displaced or dispirited in traditional classrooms or settings often find a place to shine and excel outside of the classroom, equipping them with the self-esteem to push themselves intrinsically and find the motivation to work harder. This desire is

particularly useful for helping students discover activities that they cherish—or as author Peter Benson (2008) describes it, helping students’ “spark.” Kids who find their deepest passions in an academic setting are inspired from within to achieve, both as a student and as a person. Dr. Benson found that the creative arts are consistently one of the top activities that imbue intrinsic motivation in children.

The arts offer an entry point to reintroduce learning as something positive and equitable.

For all students, high- and low-achieving, focusing on the arts after school and during the summers can maximize the pivotal in-school hours between 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Students in Chicago Public Schools attend school for less than 6 hours a day for 170 days per year (as compared to 7 hours a day for 180 days a year in Houston, for example), which means that educators often do not have the time available to go beyond basic learning. Teachers’ minutes are stretched and often

dictated by strict testing guidelines. Amy Rasmussen, executive director at Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE), believes that afterschool providers like hers are invaluable in not just lengthening the lessons taught during school, but in *strengthening* them.

Organizations like CAPE, Young Audiences of Louisiana, and Big Thought identify the concepts that students struggle with during the school day and use the afterschool time to expand students’ exposure and understanding of core curriculum. A student unable to master fractions might understand them in a dance context, learning through active, tangible quarter steps and half turns. Since 2007, CAPE has studied creativity through observable indicators, demonstrating that students participating in creative

programming report that they are better able to understand core curriculum principles when they are explained through creative activities. In one case study, a teaching artist and language arts teacher co-created curriculum combining photography with lessons on tone, a key concept measured by the English Advanced Placement Test. Of 19 students participating, 17 agreed that they believed the curriculum helped them understand tone and other literary devices in a deeper, more meaningful way (Paradis, 2011).

The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (2011) describes these kinds of outcomes in terms of "habits of mind" that create agile and flexible ways of thinking. America has entered a Steve Jobs era of success: the minds that can innovate are the minds that will find success. Unlike 50 years ago, there is not a skill or knowledge set that will not require updating, remodeling, or improving. Today's students will have to adapt to dynamic technologies and rapidly changing industries in practically every job that they encounter in the 21st century economy.

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What Do We Know About How to Make Programs Effective, Engaging, and Successful?

To begin deciphering the ingredients of success in arts and creative learning in afterschool and summer programs, the Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education in Chicago, Young Audiences of Louisiana, and Big Thought in Dallas analyzed what they learned and what strategies and approaches might have implications for others. All three organizations

- *possess decades of arts and education program delivery and coordination experience;*
- *research and evaluate curriculum, professional development, and arts integration techniques;*
- *document the academic, social, and societal benefits of creative summer and afterschool programming; and*
- *support the inclusion of enrichment in extended day programs and in the school day.*

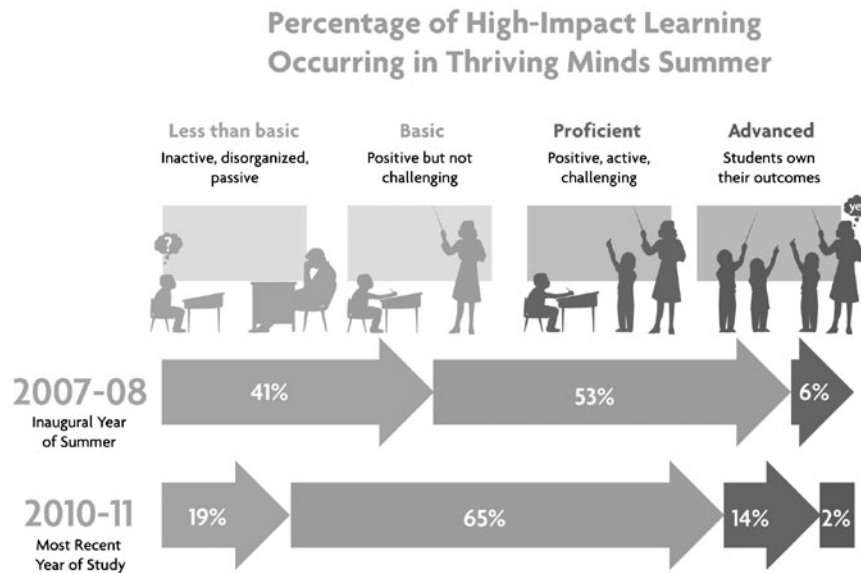
To make these opportunities happen "on the ground" in multiple locations across Louisiana, Chicago, and Dallas, they build bridges among parents, schools, instructors, cultural institutions, school districts, and city resources.

An analysis of their experiences and history of success suggests the following four foundational principles as the basis for more effective afterschool and summer programming:

1. The arts in an afterschool and summer learning context naturally advance quality teaching and learning. When students and teachers have wider parameters in how and where to carry out curriculum, the learning environment flourishes.

Students in Big Thought’s Thriving Minds Summer Camps, in cooperation with the Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD), visited a variety of city cultural and educational institutions as part of their summer learning in 2010–11. Students traveled to a nature conservatory, for instance, where they took pond samples and then drew or diagrammed the creatures they found to tie in with their science classes. Some also visited a historic district and spoke with an architect to understand the significance of buildings in their own neighborhoods. In all cases, students were exposed to distinctive lessons that lent themselves to high-impact learning opportunities.

High-impact learning is demonstrated by students when they freely offer ideas, show an active interest in making better or more creative choices, and work with the teacher to discover principles instead of memorize facts. At this level, students work towards higher grades, better answers, and intrinsic goals. The chart below provides an analysis of the increased positive influence of Big Thought programs on students’ learning opportunities in the summer. Assessed across a 4-year observational period, these opportunities are arranged along a scale of lowest impact learning (insufficient) to highest impact learning (advanced). Through a citywide commitment to creative learning, the number of Dallas participants who moved out of the “less than basic” learning designation to reach basic, proficient, or advanced increased by 22 percentage points.



Creating Quality. (n.d.). Summer learning - student benefits. Retrieved from <http://www.creatingquality.org/Home/SummerLearning/BenefitsforStudents.aspx>

The increase in high impact learning has meant that students in Dallas classrooms are beginning to catch up with their peers on standardized tests. For instance, after participating in Thriving Minds Summer Camps with greater high-impact learning, students' scores rose dramatically in only one year. Participants in grades 3 through 5 who significantly trailed their peers in 2010 saw scores on the 2011 state reading assessment rise 7 percentage points, while math scores improved more than 10 percentage points (Big Thought, 2011).

2. Educators who seek to work with afterschool and summer providers are often the crème-de-la-crème, having chosen to participate explicitly because they have the energy and desire to reach children better. These attributes are particularly useful when general classroom teachers and artists team up.

The classroom instructors and teaching artists bring complementary paradigms that both types of professionals typically find highly valuable. In the case of Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education, the organization began by examining the needs of each school to tailor programs that were most effective.

CAPE planned with the schools themselves, asking a variety of questions about the programs currently in place and determining where important connections could be made through the arts. The organization interviewed teachers and administrators to determine what kinds of integration points they needed help with, such as social studies, math, or other core subjects. CAPE's studies (DeMoss & Morris, 2002; Paradis, 2011) of the effectiveness show extensive buy-in from teachers and artists, with 91% integrating academics and with 94% of elementary students saying this made "learning fun."

In fact, the students did more than have fun—they showed gains in affective connections to core subjects. The arts consistently engaged all students in complex and analytical cognitive processes, including those students who typically struggle with academic content. No such gains were associated with traditional instructional experiences.

3. As many of us have experienced, a trip to the principal's office was not generally positive as a child and remains similarly unappealing as an adult. Too often, parents are called in to the school when there's a problem. With afterschool and summer programs, they are called in when their children are doing something positive and excelling.

Rickie Nutik explains that parents in New Orleans find afterschool and summer programs less intimidating and more flexible, encouraging them to take a more active role in their child's education. As a result, Young Audiences of Louisiana has employed a parent engagement specialist so that parents willing to help are met in the middle by the convening organization.

This success mirrors the formative work that Big Thought has done to determine what keeps parents distant from the learning process. In 2003, Big Thought began interviewing hundreds of families and found that an overwhelming majority indicated that two major barriers are lack of information (communicated in both Spanish and English and in a timely manner) and lack of transportation. By marketing and providing buses for family outings, celebration events, school-based recitals, or parent-teacher meetings, nonprofits can play a catalytic role as connectors and conveners.

In fact, many afterschool and summer learning programmers have begun to offer English classes for English language learning parents or workshops for those interested in financial literacy or parenting courses to become better all-around caregivers.

4. Thanks to the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants provided by the United States Department of Education, nonprofits like Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education, Big Thought, and Young Audiences of Louisiana are expanding relationships with local organizations beyond the “usual suspects.”

For instance, Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education not only partners with dance and theater companies to carry out afterschool programs, they also partner with family/social service organizations that provide emotional and developmental supports to children and families.

In fact, many newly formed partnerships stemmed from the interest of a non-arts organization. Young Audiences of Louisiana found that the 21st Century Community

Learning Centers grants magnetized nonprofits in the area that had been interested in reaching children in valuable ways but that had struggled to find the right partner or mechanisms to operationalize the work. Some willing partners simply lacked funding, thus giving the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants powerful leverage. The 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, in fact, is the only nationwide major federal education program that requires community-school partnerships to expand learning opportunities in afterschool and summers.

Moreover, 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants can also act as a catalyst to garner the attention of additional funding sources. The afterschool and summer areas have only just begun to enter the consciousness of many donors, major and minor. In order to facilitate dynamic and effective programming, it will take braided funding from multiple sources, as well as an array of partnerships, to design, deliver, and integrate creative activities. Ultimately the complexities of funding, designing, and implementing these programs are outweighed by the potential to dramatically affect student behavior, academic achievement, and development.

By placing the arts at the center of afterschool and summer learning time, arts organizations will respond to the overwhelming demand by civic leaders, parents, and educators for high quality, creative, expanded learning opportunities for children and youth.

With sustained financial support from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative and other similar state and local afterschool and summer funding streams, arts and creative education nonprofits can take the lead in providing these valuable programs and services, using what they know best—how to spark the interests of children through exciting curriculum and instruction.

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School, community, and parent leaders should reach out to their arts, cultural, and creative organizations and businesses to explore how they can systematically work together to integrate and infuse the arts into their expanded learning opportunities in the summers and afterschool. Furthermore, schools can incentivize these partnerships and creative teaching and learning by using their Title I, Title II, and local funds in new but entirely permissible ways—thereby maximizing their impact and leveraging other resources.

The beneficiaries will not just be arts organizations and participating schools but the children themselves—a goal that can unite us all.

Conclusion

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Gigi Antoni, president/CEO of Big Thought, has more than 20 years of experience as a nonprofit executive, consultant, and speaker, both nationally and internationally. She was named a Champion of Change by the White House and received the National Arts Leadership Award by the National Guild for Community Arts Education

Rickie Nutik is the executive director of Young Audiences New Orleans. She has worked on behalf of Louisiana children for over 25 years to inspire, empower, and unite children and communities through education, arts, and culture. She also serves on several community boards, including the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Youth and Families.

Amy Rasmussen serves as executive director of Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education, where she has guided the organization through unprecedented growth as a partner to Chicago Public Schools in implementing and sustaining arts programs. Rasmussen was named a Champion of Change for Arts Education by the White House in July 2011.

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Sam Piha

Founder and Principal, Temescal Associates

David Sinski

Chief Officer of Strategy and Innovation,
After School Matters

Connecting Older Youth to Success Through Afterschool

Many people assume that since high school youth have outgrown daycare and have ready access to academic programs and extracurricular activities provided by the typical comprehensive high school, they have everything they need to succeed. One only has to look, however, at the high numbers of disconnected youth, as well as the high number of dropouts and the expressed concerns of the business community, to accept that many young people are not prepared to enter the workforce and join in as full participants in our nation's democracy.

Making the Case

Adolescents are at a time in their lives where they are experiencing a number of key developmental tasks that afterschool and summer learning programs have the opportunity to address. Robert Halpern (2009) describes these tasks, as follows:

- *Older youth begin to seek experiences that involve more complex tasks, and they start to assert control over their lives and communities. They also need to balance their preoccupation with self versus a commitment to others.*
- *Teenagers resist being dependent upon and controlled by another, while they also know they must navigate the adult world and create their role in it.*
- *Young people are forging a sense of identity and finding their voice as individuals who can positively influence others. They want to demonstrate real accomplishment, and they yearn for recognition of their achievements.*

While afterschool programs serving older youth are not new, there is growing recognition that they are critical for helping young people grow into well-rounded, successful adults.

Evaluations of 22 afterschool and summer programs done by the American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF) in 2009 found that older youth who participated in expanded learning opportunities demonstrate positive outcomes across a range of indicators, including improved academic success, career preparation, and social and emotional development (Bowles & Brand, 2009).

For some older youth, the regular school day can be too narrowly focused and not long enough to provide adequate access to the types of developmental activities that they want and need. While afterschool programs serving older youth are not new, there is growing recognition that they are critical for helping young people grow into well-rounded, successful adults. Adolescents need access to structured opportunities that offer greater autonomy and meaning. That said, due to competing demands for teenagers' time (such as hobbies, team sports, work, and social interests), activities provided by afterschool programs must be relevant to their wants and needs (Temescal Associates, 2009).

Research has shown that expanded learning opportunities are highly successful in improving young people's academic performance, college and career preparation, social and emotional development, and health and wellness (Bowles & Brand, 2009). Evaluations of 22 afterschool and summer programs done by the American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF) in 2009 found that older youth who participated in expanded learning opportunities demonstrate positive outcomes across a range of indicators, including improved academic success, career preparation, and social and emotional development (Bowles & Brand, 2009).

Promising Practices

Two large-scale afterschool and summer programs for older youth, one across California and one across Chicago, provide a learning laboratory for the field to identify what strategies and structures are most effective. Additionally, what makes these programs so instructive is that they are supported by different funding streams, are led and coordinated by different types of organizations, and were initiated at different levels—one at the state level primarily using federal funds and one at the local level primarily using local funds. Yet, their examples should be helpful to anyone interested in engaging older youth in afterschool and summer learning.

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California

In California, over 50% of the state's 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding is dedicated to afterschool programs for high school age youth. These 5-year grants are currently supporting 345 high schools programs that serve nearly 55,000 youth. The following examples illuminate essential characteristics of effective local programs guided and supported by this key state-directed initiative known as the After School Safety and Education Program for Teens (ASSETs).

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Engaging, Active, and Meaningful Learning Opportunities

Successful programs that serve older youth foster active, hands-on learning. For example, Balboa High School Afterschool program in San Francisco offers project-based learning clubs that allow participants to engage in hands-on activities, including woodworking, digital media arts and animation, and computer programming and troubleshooting.

Quality programs for teenagers often help them prepare for their future in the workforce. The Los Angeles After School All-Stars program, for example, exposes older youth participants to different career options in its Career Exploration Opportunities Initiative. Participants meet with local business owners, community leaders, and role models through in-person interviews and field trips to workplaces and business schools. Students have had the opportunity to interview chefs at the Culinary Institute and take a design class at the Sketchers headquarters, where they were able to design their own sneakers.

Balboa High School Afterschool program in San Francisco offers project-based learning clubs that allow participants to engage in hands-on activities, including woodworking, digital media arts and animation, and computer programming and troubleshooting.

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Community Involvement

Afterschool programs need to build relationships with organizations within the community in order to offer young people a bridging experience to the real world (Temescal Associates, 2009). For example, the program at McLane High School in Fresno, California, partners with a number of businesses and community organizations, such as GAP, Chic Shoes, Macy's, Mary-Kay, Bloomingdale's, the NFL, and other organizations, in order to provide in-kind donations, workshops, and speaking engagements covering topics such as self-esteem and healthy relationships.

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Link to the School Day and Use of School Personnel

Successful afterschool programs must have a strong partnership with school site leaders. This partnership must be based on a shared vision of how they will support young people (Temescal Associates, 2009). The Blair LEARNS high school afterschool program in Pasadena, California, has had success in a number of areas, including recruitment and retention, improved school day attendance, and student achievement. This could not have been possible without the strong relationship between the program's director and the school principal. The two meet regularly and engage school counseling staff to share student performance data, including grades, test scores, attendance, and behavior/discipline. A large percentage of Blair LEARNS participants take advantage of the credit recovery option, and the school increased its on-time graduation rate by over 28% between 2003 and 2007. Of 155 on-time graduates in 2009, 84 relied on credits recovered in afterschool (Forum for Youth Investment, 2009).

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Chicago

After School Matters targets high school teens in underserved neighborhoods who attend schools struggling with high drop out rates and low graduation rates. In 2011, After School Matters offered more than 900 programs across Chicago, engaging more than 15,000 teens. Partners included 60 high schools, more than 100 community-based organizations, the Chicago Park District, the Chicago Public Library, and various departments within the City of Chicago. Financial support for these opportunities is provided by a variety of sources, including government funding from the city of Chicago and the state of Illinois, partner support from the schools and parks, and contributions from corporations, foundations, and individuals.

After School Matters core programs are apprenticeships in which teens develop their career readiness capacities while learning marketable skills from industry professionals. The programs keep teens safe and connected to caring adults. A recent study by Northwestern University's School of Education and Social Policy found that teens participating in After School Matters showed more positive youth development and less problem behavior and exhibited a stronger sense of connection to their school, as well as a stronger perceived value of school and academics (Hirsch, Hedges, Stawicki, & Mekinda, 2011).

Some of the key strategies that make After School Matters successful include

- *hands-on, project-based activities in five content areas: arts, communications, sports, science, and technology;*
- *instructors with professional backgrounds in their content area;*
- *an annual professional development conference for instructors and ongoing youth-work training on concepts from the Youth Program Quality framework developed by the David P. Weikert Center for Youth Program Quality (<http://www.cypq.org/>);*
- *incentives, such as service learning credit, program awards or stipends, transportation support, end-of-year celebrations, food, field trips, guest speakers, and master classes taught by industry experts;*
- *formalized meetings with school leadership to review program success metrics and reinforce roles;*
- *simple introductory telephone conversations with parents to encourage full teen engagement in programming; and*
- *authentic learning that connects teens to the world outside of their school and neighborhood.*

Recommendations for Practitioners Within Schools and Within Communities

While the origination and funding sources of the afterschool and summer learning programs across California and in Chicago described above are different, the lessons learned are similar and consistent regarding how to make these programs work effectively. Based on those findings, here are some key recommendations:

- *Successful programs develop strong partnerships with community-based organizations and the school administration. This includes hiring staff members who develop strong working relationships with principals and key school personnel. Collaboration with community partners is also essential.*
- *In order to be competitive with older youth's interests and developmental needs, programs must offer a blend of structured activities, informal social time, opportunities to develop skills, and the chance to build close relationships with adults and peers. Older youth are also motivated to join programs that provide academic credit, college and job preparation, internship opportunities, and stipends for participation.*
- *Gathering youth input on program planning and offerings is crucial to engaging and retaining older youth.*
- *Successful programs should have strong adult leaders and skilled staff who are able to relate to older youth and are more expert in their subject matter than those who work with younger children.*

Capture Their Hearts and Their Minds Will Follow

Thanks to a partnership with NASA, students in the rural community of Santa Rosa, Texas, have created a community on Mars that was not only scientifically sound but also one they'd want to be a part of. Focused back on Earth, students toured the city's courthouse and met with a federal magistrate, whose personal story gave the teenagers a better understanding of how current coursework relates to future careers.

The "ACE" (Afterschool Centers on Education) program serves 300 students ages 12 to 18. It has a holistic approach that focuses on strengthening science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and arts skills. By blending in the arts, abstract thinking is increased and lets students explore creative ideas while also learning math and science. Thanks to extensive community partnerships, students are introduced to a range of careers through field trips and interactions with local leaders.

According to a survey of district teachers, 80% reported an increased rate of homework completion and 84% reported an overall improvement in academic performance for participating students. In the past year, 100% of seniors in the program graduated. By creating engaging and meaningful learning opportunities in partnership with the community the ACE program is truly living its motto "Capture their hearts and their minds will follow."

For More Information

There are a number of resources that provide best-practices recommendations for afterschool practitioners:

- **High School Field Resources** (<http://www.temescalassociates.com/resources/hsresourcesfield.asp>), developed by Temescal Associates, provides articles, written interviews, case studies, and other resources for high school workers.
- **Learning in Afterschool & Summer** (<http://www.learninginafterschool.org/>), developed by Temescal Associates, calls on afterschool to promote young people's learning by incorporating five key learning principles. It provides a number of resources for high school afterschool program leaders, including videos, research, literature, current developments in the afterschool field, a regularly updated blog, and much more.
- **Beyond Expectations: The Power of High School Afterschool** is a video that provides a number of best practices and recommendations for high school afterschool programs. It is available to watch or order at <http://www.temescalassociates.com/video/beyondexpectationsweb/beyondexpectationswatch.htm>.
- **After School Matters** (<http://www.afterschoolmatters.org/>) offers more detailed background on After School Matters, its programming, and related research.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Sam Piha is the founder and principal of Temescal Associates, a firm that provides consulting in education, youth development, and afterschool programs. He began his career in 1975 as a classroom teacher and a family therapist before directing afterschool programs at the regional and national levels. He has been a long-time advocate for and trainer on high school afterschool programs.

David Sinski is chief officer of strategy and innovation for After School Matters in Chicago. He has worked in youth development for over 25 years, starting first as a counselor to teenage runaways and their families and then working with immigrant families as they struggled to support teens at risk of psychiatric hospitalization. More recently he has held administrative positions and has currently served in leadership capacities at After School Matters. He has been active in building coalitions of providers and intermediaries and has great interest in nurturing learning communities regarding serving older youth.

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Crystal Weedall FitzSimons

Director of School and Out-of-School Time Programs, Food Research and Action Center

Daniel W. Hatcher

National Healthy Out-of-School Time Advisor, Alliance for a Healthier Generation

Creating Healthier Environments: Strategies and Examples for Afterschool and Summer Programs, Including 21st Century Community Learning Centers

Afterschool and summer programs, especially those supported by the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, can play an important role in improving the health and nutritional well-being of our nation's children. Too many children are not at a healthy weight—one-third of school children in our country are overweight or obese (Ogden, Carrol, Kit, & Flegal, (2012). Too many also experience food insecurity—one-fifth of all children live in households that are struggling to put food on the table (Coleman-Jensen, Nord, Andrews, & Carlson, (2011).

As will be discussed below, obesity and hunger have a negative impact on student achievement. There are, however, accessible and affordable strategies to address these problems that are well suited to the design of afterschool and summer programs. Implementing these strategies helps support the broader goal of many afterschool and summer programs, especially those supported by the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, to improve student achievement among children attending high-poverty schools.

The negative impact of obesity and hunger on student achievement is well documented. Children who are overweight or obese have poorer academic performance, more behavioral problems, and higher rates of school absenteeism (Bethell, Simpson, Stumbo, Carle, & Gombojav, 2010; Krukowski et al., 2009; Taras & Potts-Datema, 2005; BeLue, Francis, & Colaco, 2009; Geier et al., 2007; Mustillo et al., 2003). Children experiencing hunger have lower math scores and are more likely to repeat a grade (Alaimo, Olson, & Frongillo, 2001). They are more likely to be hyperactive, absent, and tardy, and more likely to display behavioral and attention problems more frequently than other children (Murphy et al., 1998).

Some of the children attending 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs and similar programs are likely to be experiencing both obesity and food insecurity (that is, the inability to afford and/or access enough nutritious food for a healthful life). Obesity negatively affects both males and females, as well as all racial and age groups, but low-income children and food-insecure children may be at even greater risk (Eisenmann, Gundersen, Lohman, Garasky, & Stewart, 2011; Singh, Saipush, & Kogan, 2010; Townsend & Melgar-Quinonez, 2003). Child obesity is linked to limited access to healthy and affordable foods, limited opportunities for physical activity, greater availability of fast food restaurants (especially near schools), and greater exposure to food-related marketing (Larson, Story, & Nelson, 2009; Powell, Slater, & Chaloupka, 2004; Kumanyika & Grier, 2006). Those who are food insecure and suffer periods of even moderate deprivation may also overeat when food does become available, resulting in chronic ups and downs in food intake that can contribute to weight gain (Smith & Richards, 2008).

Strategies to Reduce Hunger and Combat Obesity

The key strategies that afterschool and summer programs can use to combat obesity are to serve healthy meals and snacks, improve the nutritional and physical environment, offer nutrition education, and provide physical activity. Similarly, the key strategy to reducing hunger is to provide children with the nutritious meals and snacks that their bodies desperately need, using the federal funding that is available through the afterschool and summer nutrition programs. These strategies, discussed below, ensure that children can continue learning throughout the afternoon or for the duration of a summer program. These strategies also provide an additional sustainable funding source for local 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs and ease the financial burden on struggling families' resources so that their food dollars can stretch further.

- **Serving healthy meals and snacks.** *Nutrition research suggests the importance of afterschool and summer programs for obesity prevention. For example, children of mothers working nontraditional hours are at greater risk of becoming overweight and experiencing obesity (Miller & Han, 2008). This supports the need to provide afterschool snacks and suppers to children, especially those from working families. During the summertime, children are more vulnerable to rapid gains in body mass index (BMI), as well as food insecurity, because many of them do not have access to the good nutrition provided by school meal programs available during the school year (von Hippel, Powell, Downey, & Rowland, 2007; Nord & Romig, 2006).*

The key strategies that afterschool and summer programs can use to combat obesity are to serve healthy meals and snacks, improve the nutritional and physical environment, offer nutrition education, and provide physical activity.

Afterschool and summer programs should therefore serve meals and snacks that include low-fat milk, fruits and vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains, and they should make water freely available during the program. Federal dollars are accessible to 21st Century Community Learning Centers and other afterschool and summer learning programs to enable them to serve nutritious meals and snacks to children. Specifically, the Afterschool Meal and Snack Programs¹ and the Summer Nutrition Programs² provide funding to purchase food, freeing up resources that can be redirected to support staffing or program activities. Research reveals that on days when school-age children eat federally funded supper at an afterschool program, they have a higher daily intake of fruits, vegetables, milk, and key nutrients such as calcium, vitamin A, and folate, compared to days that they do not (Plante & Bruening, 2004).

- **Improving the nutritional and physical environment.** *Afterschool and summer programs should take a comprehensive approach to creating healthier out-of-school-time environments. For example, the Alhambra Unified School District in California provides monthly staff trainings on fruits and vegetables. This training is supported by weekly meetings of cooking clubs that provide staff with hands-on learning opportunities. The district also encourages staff wellness by sponsoring activities, including health screenings at professional development trainings for out-of-school-time staff, onsite fitness activities (such as Zumba, walking clubs, yoga, etc.), and promoting physical activity opportunities in the community (for example, staff participation in 5K races, free passes to fitness centers).*

Staff wellness programs not only support employees individually, they benefit students as well and contribute to overall program success. Potential benefits include increased employee retention, improved employee morale, the presence of more healthy adult role models for students, and a more positive community image for program sites.

- **Offering nutrition education and/or physical activity.** *Afterschool and summer programs can offer evidence-based nutrition education classes that are delivered by qualified personnel. Black's Mill Elementary School in Dawsonville, Georgia, for example, implemented an eight-session healthy living curriculum called empowerME4Life to teach children how to eat better and move more. The site has developed a partnership with its local American Taekwondo Association. A representative from the association comes to the site to lead physical activity. Another program of note is that of the Genesee Intermediate School District in Michigan, which offers regular nutrition education and also coordinates a school garden program. In addition to eating a healthy snack after school, children take fresh produce back to their homes.*

1. The Child and Adult Care Food Program provides funding to serve meals and/or snacks at 21st CCLCs and other afterschool programs that are located in areas where at least half of the children are qualified to receive free or reduced-price school meals. Programs that are school-sponsored also can receive federal funding for snacks through the National School Lunch Program.

2. The Summer Food Service Program and the National School Lunch Program provide funding to serve meals and snacks during the summer to children at 21st CCLCs or other sites that are located in areas where at least half of the children are eligible to receive free or reduced-price school meals, that serve primarily low-income children, or that serve primarily migrant children.

Looking Ahead: Healthy Out-of-School Time

One of the most exciting recent developments in efforts to improve nutrition and health in afterschool and summer programs is the promulgation of a set of *Standards for Healthy Eating and Physical Activity*³ by the Healthy Out-of-School Time (HOST) Coalition, a national coalition of leading organizations in the fields of out-of-school time and health and nutrition. The Alliance for a Healthier Generation and the Food Research Action Center provided expertise and guidance to the coalition.

Evidence-based standards have now been crafted for afterschool programs around physical activity, nutrition, and nutrition education. These new program models and standards, coupled with additional funding for programs such as the federal afterschool meal program, have given communities new tools in the quest to keep our kids healthy for life.

The vision for this coalition is to foster health and well-being practices in afterschool programs nationwide, using science-based standards for healthy eating, physical activity, screen time, and social supports for these behaviors including staff, family and child engagement. The evidence-based standards developed by the HOST Coalition, and adopted by the National Afterschool Association, provide an important roadmap for afterschool and summer programs, especially 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs, to address the health and nutritional needs of the children they serve.

Over the past 15 years, funding from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative and other afterschool sources has created a new space and extra time for caring adults to work with children and youth. It has created what some have called a “new neighborhood” of supports for our children. At the same time this new space has grown across America, concerns have grown about children’s health, particularly obesity and hunger. Afterschool and summer programs have risen to this challenge by developing new program approaches that focus on healthy activities and nutrition. Evidence-based standards have now been crafted for afterschool programs around physical activity, nutrition, and nutrition education. These new program models and standards, coupled with additional funding for programs such as the federal afterschool meal program, have given communities new tools in the quest to keep our kids healthy for life. Those tools are now being used in thousands of communities across America. Yet, too many afterschool and summer programs are still not taking full advantage of these new tools and resources that are increasingly available to them to support healthier lifestyles. They could and should actively seek out those in their communities who have an

interest in improving children’s health and the resources to do so. Conversely, others who are concerned about children’s health should assertively reach out to these programs to expand and improve them with healthy eating and healthy activities components. The health of our children—and the health of nation’s future—are at stake.

3. <http://www.naaweb.org/downloads/resources/HEPAStandards8-4-11final.pdf>

For More Information

Alliance for a Healthier Generation, www.healthiergeneration.org, resources for schools, out-of-school time programs, communities, families, doctors and industry on ways to work together to address one of the nation's leading public health threats - childhood obesity.

EmpowerME4Life, www.healthiergeneration.org/teens, a healthy living curriculum from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation - equipping kids with new attitudes, skills and knowledge about eating better and moving more - for life.

Food Research and Action Center, www.frac.org, information on how to participate in the afterschool and summer nutrition programs.

National Institute on Out-of-School Time HOST Coalition, <http://www.niost.org/HOST-Program/>, resources for Healthy Out-of-School Time.

Afterschool Nutrition in Washington, DC: An Overview of the District's Accomplishments and Opportunities for Growth, http://www.dchunger.org/pdf/afterschool_issue_brief.pdf, an in-depth analysis of the Afterschool Meal Program operated by the District of Columbia Public School's Office of Food and Nutrition Services.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Crystal Weedall FitzSimons is the director of school and out-of-school time programs for the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC). At FRAC, FitzSimons oversees FRAC's policy, advocacy, and technical assistance work to increase children's access to the federal school, summer, and afterschool nutrition programs. She holds a BA in philosophy and sociology from Carroll College and a baster of social work from Washington University.

Daniel W. Hatcher is a national healthy out-of-school time advisor for the Alliance for a Healthier Generation. At the Alliance, Hatcher supports community-based organizations to ensure out-of-school-time settings promote the healthy development of all young people. He holds a BA in international relations and a master of public health with a concentration in health education, both from Western Kentucky University.

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