

NYSAN Policy Brief

A Policy Agenda to Achieve Afterschool for All in New York State

Quality afterschool programs keep kids safe, support working families and provide children and youth with important learning, personal development, arts and recreational opportunities. They are a key component of a strong system of public education and youth development.

Studies show that afterschool programs help reduce youth crime and violence, drug use and teen pregnancies¹ and that students who regularly attend quality afterschool programs have better school attendance records and are more likely to succeed in school.² In addition, public opinion polls repeatedly show that voters think afterschool programs are important and should be expanded.³

Yet, the need for quality afterschool opportunities in New York State far exceeds supply. The current system of public policy and funding for afterschool in New York State is fragmented across multiple state agencies and initiatives. This structure supports a rich diversity of services, but creates inefficiencies that hinder efforts to increase program quality and availability.

In 2006, New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN) held forums on afterschool in seven regions of New York State. From these forums, together with a statewide advisory committee of leading afterschool providers, advocates, intermediaries and funders, NYSAN developed a set of Guiding Principles for the goals and operation of a statewide afterschool system. These Guiding Principles are outlined in this policy brief.

New York's policymakers need to take action, working with leaders across the public and private sectors, to move these Guiding Principles into a system that achieves afterschool for all.



New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN) is a statewide public-private partnership dedicated to promoting young people's safety, learning and healthy development by increasing the quality and availability of programs during non-school hours. The positions taken and statements set forth in this document do not necessarily represent the views of all NYSAN members. For a copy of this and other NYSAN publications, visit www.nysan.org.

Snapshot of Afterschool in New York State

- ◆ **Afterschool Helps Kids Succeed:** Kids who participate in quality afterschool programs improve significantly in their feelings and attitudes toward school, in their behavior, and in their school and achievement test scores.⁴
- ◆ **The Public Supports Afterschool:** 94% of New York State voters agree that quality afterschool programs are important to supporting the academic and social development of children. 76% are willing to pay an additional \$100 per year in taxes to ensure that every child in New York has access to an afterschool program.⁵
- ◆ **Coordination is Needed to Increase Program Quality and Access:** New York State spends nearly \$300 million in local, state and federal funds annually on afterschool programs, plus many millions more on school-age child care and on other programs to supplement and extend the school day. Better coordination across these funding streams could reduce inefficiencies and foster increased quality and availability of programs.
- ◆ **Afterschool Opportunities Must be Expanded:** While the major afterschool and school-age care programs in New York State and City serve more than 400,000 kids, it is estimated that an additional 600,000 slots are needed.⁶ More stable and sustainable resources are required to meet this need.

Guiding Principles for a Statewide Afterschool System

A statewide afterschool system must:

- ◆ **Provide afterschool opportunities that are accessible to ALL children and youth**, ensuring that access is not hindered by a child's family income, age, race, disability, geographic location, housing status, sexual orientation, language skills or other personal or family characteristics.
- ◆ **Have strong public leadership and support.** While a statewide afterschool system should allow for the blending of resources from multiple public and private sources, state government should take the lead in coordinating resources to ensure that services are available for all kids and families who wish to access them.
- ◆ **Promote high-quality programs through a common system that builds on established standards**, integrates existing regulatory, accreditation and credentialing systems, recognizes the varied goals and developmental levels of programs, and provides incentives for programs to achieve higher levels of quality. A common quality system should ensure that programs and communities address the full range of children and youth's intellectual, social, emotional and physical development.
- ◆ **Provide a continuum of support for all school-age children and youth** that ensures access to developmentally appropriate activities and services from childhood through adolescence.
- ◆ **Encourage partnerships at all levels** (e.g., school-CBO, public-private, state-local, etc.) to bring a wide range of resources, perspectives and talents to the provision of afterschool opportunities and to create more seamless referrals among the full range of human/social services.
- ◆ **Ensure accountability for the delivery of high-quality programs and outcomes**, while providing sufficient local flexibility and control to support programming that is responsive to local community and family needs.

Guiding Principles for State Afterschool Funding

To move towards an afterschool system that is accessible and affordable to all children and youth, public funding streams in New York State must be reformed. Through such reform, state funding mechanisms for afterschool must:

- ◆ **Coordinate existing state and federal funding streams** for afterschool, school-age child care, extended school day and supplemental education services to help programs blend, leverage and maximize resources. Reforms should include aligning standards and regulatory requirements and coordinating procedures, from application processes to reporting and evaluation systems.
- ◆ **Increase funding and reduce categorical restrictions** to ensure that programs have sufficient resources to cover the full costs of high-quality programming (including such costs as transportation, facilities, professional development, nutritious snacks/meals, evaluation and administration).
- ◆ **Provide a sustained and dependable funding source** for programs which meet high standards of programmatic quality and administrative accountability.
- ◆ **Eliminate barriers to the blending of funds** from multiple public and private sources, including allowing family contributions.
- ◆ **Provide sufficient local flexibility and control** to ensure programming meets local needs. State funding should allow communities to plan for and support a mix of program models, settings and content designed to best serve locally-determined needs of children and families, while achieving statewide quality standards and outcome goals.
- ◆ **Examine the role of matching fund requirements** to encourage localities to match state contributions while allowing flexibility in provider-level match requirements.

1 Fight Crime: Invest in Kids New York. "New York's Afterschool Choice: The Prime Time for Juvenile Crime or Youth Enrichment and Achievement", 2002.
2 D. Huang, B. Gribbons, K.S. Kim, and C. Lee. "The Impact of the LA's BEST After School Program on Subsequent Student Achievement and Performance", May 2000.
3 U.S. Department of Education. "21st Century Community Learning Centers: Providing Quality Afterschool Learning Opportunities for America's Families", Sept. 2000.
4 Afterschool Alliance polling, July 2007 and November 2006. http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/poll_reports.cfm
5 Durlak, Joseph A. and Weissberg, Roger P. "The Impact of After-School Programs That Promote Personal and Social Skills". Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, 2007.
6 Poll by The After-School Corporation, 2004.
7 Fight Crime: Invest in Kids New York. op. cit.