

NYSAN Policy Brief

Creating a Stronger Afterschool System for New York State

Each year in New York State, almost \$300 million in local, state and federal funds are spent on afterschool programs,* and millions more on subsidies for school-age child care. At the state level, funding from 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC), Advantage After School, Extended School Day/School Violence Prevention, Youth Development/Delinquency Prevention and several smaller funding streams support a range of programs that provide youth with educational, recreational and cultural experiences. New York City alone allocates more than \$100 million in local tax dollars to out-of-school time programs. In addition, school districts are using new state education funding – through the Contracts for Excellence – for programs to extend the school day and year.

Increasingly, kids, parents and educators are calling for greater access to learning and development opportunities beyond the traditional school day. Yet despite the progress New York State has made in supporting afterschool – committing a range of public and private funding sources, creating innovative professional development opportunities and developing an array of high-quality programs – the supply of afterschool programs falls far short of the need. More than 600,000 youth in New York State are without adult supervision during the critical afterschool hours.¹

The inadequate supply of afterschool programs is only part of the challenge. While there are many good programs, there is variation in program quality. Many providers grapple with differing standards and administrative requirements imposed by their varied public and private funders. Too few programs have sufficient resources for staff training that is central to program quality improvement.

Such gaps and fragmentation mean that too many children still are missing out. A stronger, better integrated afterschool system in New York State – with coordinated planning and consistent standards – is necessary to address these shortcomings. As this policy brief describes, by building on the examples of other leading states and localities, New York could create a more efficient system that would both increase access to and improve the quality of afterschool opportunities throughout the state.

* "Afterschool" here is meant broadly, to encompass before-school and afterschool hours, summer break and holidays.

Recommendations for New York State Policymakers

- ◆ **Leadership:** Bring public and private sector leaders together to establish a common vision for the state's afterschool system, and create the planning and policy-making mechanisms needed to achieve it.
- ◆ **Coordinated Policy Development and Funding:** Establish a state-level leadership body to facilitate interagency coordination and stakeholder input on policy and funding. This body should be empowered to align standards and administrative requirements across agencies and funding streams, and to find new ways of coordinating and leveraging public and private resources.
- ◆ **Adequate Resources:** Align, and ultimately increase, investment to ensure all children have access to high-quality afterschool programs. Funding must be based on a cost model that encompasses professional development, technical assistance, transportation, evaluation and other activities that promote program quality.
- ◆ **Diversity of Services:** Ensure continued support for variety and choice in program approaches and settings (school sites, community-based nonprofits, faith-based organizations, etc.), while holding programs accountable for common quality standards and youth development outcomes.
- ◆ **Data-Driven Decisions:** Gather and use data on afterschool programming – such as the gap between supply and demand, and the use of federal, state and local funding – to drive policy development and resource allocation.
- ◆ **State and Local Intermediaries:** Support the expansion of intermediary organizations that can facilitate afterschool program development and quality improvement at the state, regional and local levels.

The Findings: Coordination Increases Access, Quality and Accountability

A look at what is happening around the nation is instructive for New York State. In response to growing public demand for afterschool programs – and in light of new research on child and adolescent brain development and the advantages of afterschool participation – many states and localities have increased investment in afterschool system-building.

Four of the most prominent examples – California, Illinois, Washington State and New York City – are profiled in this policy brief. While the details of each approach to system-building differ, there are several commonalities that should guide efforts in New York State:

- ◆ Leadership of top officials. The impetus to establish a vision and a course for change on afterschool often comes from a top policymaker – such as a governor, mayor, state-level cabinet member or legislative leader – who can influence action across a range of departments, programs and stakeholders.
- ◆ A structure for coordinating planning, policy development, funding and administration at the state level. Successful coordinating entities appear to share the following features:
 - ◆ A single organization or partnership empowered to set afterschool policy across multiple agencies and to blend or better align funding streams
 - ◆ A multi-year state afterschool plan developed with extensive stakeholder input and encompassing the full range of strategies and resources needed to produce high-quality programs
 - ◆ Use of data and research to drive decisions regarding program models, resource allocation and accountability standards
- ◆ Linkages between afterschool and the traditional school day. For school-site as well as community-based afterschool providers, mechanisms are created at the policy and staff levels to encourage cooperation between afterschool and school-day programming.

- ◆ Intermediaries that convene stakeholders and support ongoing quality improvement. Afterschool intermediaries that operate outside of government agencies bring valuable capacity-building skills and long-term continuity to system-building efforts.

California: Expanding Access and Accountability

California has the largest publicly funded afterschool system in the nation. Showing the broad public support for expanding access to afterschool, California voters in 2002 approved Proposition 49, a statewide ballot initiative that mandated a fourfold increase in state funding for afterschool programs serving elementary and middle school students.

Under Prop 49, \$550 million from California's general fund is set aside each year for K-9 afterschool programs. These funds are administered by the California Department of Education (CDE) through its After School Education and Safety (ASES) Program. ASES provides direct grants, with a local matching requirement, to just over one-half of California's public and charter schools serving elementary or middle school students.

- ◆ Alignment of State and Federal Funding Streams: Prop 49 meant that, through ASES, there would be much greater funding for afterschool programs. Accordingly, the state legislature transitioned 21st CCLC programs serving K-9 students to ASES, while allocating 50% of California's 21st CCLC funds for programs at high schools (up from 6%).
- ◆ Research-Based Accountability Standards: To track program impact and provide a basis for grant renewals, CDE requires ASES-funded programs to submit data on indicators that research shows are associated with young people's academic and personal success. ASES grantees must report on participants' afterschool program attendance and school-day attendance, as well as on student outcomes. For the student-outcome indicators, ASES grantees have the option of using standardized test scores, but may also use data on participants' positive behavioral change, homework completion rates, skill development or other measures identified by CDE. This broader accountability framework was the result of a hard-fought victory by youth advocates.

Illinois: Cross-Agency Collaboration and Data-Driven Planning

Illinois' afterschool system features a formal structure by which the state's education and human services departments, along with community stakeholders, work together on planning, policy development, funding and provider support. As a result, Illinois can direct resources more efficiently and equitably, laying the groundwork for a 10-year expansion plan for the state's afterschool system.

◆ **Legislative Mandate for Interagency Collaboration:** In 2003, the state legislature established the Illinois After-School Partnership to promote ongoing system-building guided by the recommendations of a state-commissioned task force. The Partnership is co-chaired and jointly funded by the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Department of Human Services (with additional major funding from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation), yet is housed and staffed outside these two agencies, at the nonprofit Illinois Center for Violence Prevention. The Partnership helps coordinate grants, training and technical assistance across the state's major afterschool funding streams, and encourages interagency collaboration in allocating new afterschool funds, such as those resulting from legislative earmarks.

◆ **Data-Driven Planning for Public Investment in Afterschool:** The Illinois After-School Partnership is nearing completion of a study of public investment in afterschool in the state as well as of the gap between supply and demand. The study, to be presented to the state legislature in 2008, will recommend funding for a 10-year expansion plan to provide high-quality afterschool programs for all Illinois youth who need them.

Washington State: Statewide Planning and Capacity- Building that Link Multiple Systems

Washington State is distinct in developing a planning and capacity-building system that engages rural as well as urban/suburban areas and builds on the quality-improvement activities of other youth-serving systems. School's Out Washington – a nonprofit intermediary established in 1987 and supported by public funds, foundation grants and program revenue – has played a critical role in system-building in the state.

◆ **A Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Afterschool:** In 2004, School's Out Washington was designated by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction – the lead state agency for K-12 education – to facilitate a statewide planning process. The result was *Afterschool in Washington: A Smart, Strategic Investment*. This plan has guided system-building efforts and helped lay the groundwork for the creation of Washington's first dedicated state funding stream for afterschool.

◆ **Regional Intermediaries to Support Capacity-Building and Link Systems:** Washington State ensures that capacity-building is not limited to the main population areas (i.e., the Seattle-Tacoma-Olympia corridor). Funded with a portion of the state's Child Care and Development Block Grant, the Washington Regional Afterschool Project (WRAP) is a network of six organizations offering professional development activities and coordinating planning for afterschool in each region of the state. Currently, WRAP partners are working with 60 programs statewide to implement a new quality assessment tool that has been designed to align with the five-star quality rating system for early learning being developed by the state. WRAP is administered by School's Out Washington through a \$750,000 annual contract with the state.

New York City: Local Coordination of Funding and Program Support

New York City demonstrates the impact of a locality's ability to blend funding to build a cohesive support and accountability system for afterschool. Launched in 2003, the city's Out-of-School Time (OST) Initiative is the largest municipally funded afterschool program in the country. In FY08, OST's \$109 million budget supports over 640 programs serving more than 80,000 young people, with the budget set to increase to \$121 million for FY09. Intended as a sustainable revenue source for providers, OST funding is included in the City's five-year financial plan.

The OST Initiative is overseen by the City's Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), which works to align OST resources and standards with other DYCD youth programs as well as with those of other city agencies, such as the New York City Housing Authority and the Department of

Parks & Recreation. In addition, DYCD entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the New York City Department of Education that gives OST-funded community-based organizations access to school sites and to in-kind support in the form of security, food and facility services. More than 60% of OST programs are school-based.

Highlights of the OST Initiative's coordination and capacity-building efforts include the following:

- ◆ **Blended Funding:** The OST Initiative is funded by a combination of city tax levy, state youth delinquency prevention and school-age child care dollars. In addition, the city obtained a five-year, \$12 million grant from the Wallace Foundation for planning, professional development and evaluation.
- ◆ **Clear Goals and Quality Standards:** With input from the provider community, DYCD established a set of youth development goals for OST programs. To help program staff build capacity to achieve these goals, DYCD encourages use of the NYSAN Program Quality Self-Assessment (QSA) Tool and based DYCD's program monitoring tool on the QSA framework.
- ◆ **Geographical Targeting of Funds:** As part of its competitive review process for distributing grants, the OST Initiative uses a geographically based formula that takes into consideration community need.
- ◆ **Support for Customized Professional Development and External Evaluation:** The OST Initiative has contracted with outside agencies to provide customized training and technical assistance for grantees' staff and to conduct a three-year longitudinal evaluation.



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.

NYSAN thanks the funders whose generous support made this policy brief possible: The After-School Corporation; Charles Stewart Mott Foundation; Neighborhood Family Services Coalition; The New York Community Trust; The Robert Bowne Foundation; and Robert Sterling Clark Foundation.

A Call for Action: Strengthen Afterschool to Create Better Futures for New York State's Children and Families

This policy brief focuses on actions New York State can take to improve policy development and funding for afterschool and – as a result – to use public and private resources more efficiently and effectively. Taking these steps requires that New York State's leaders commit to making the benefits of high-quality afterschool opportunities available to all our children.

Afterschool programming helps keep kids safe, improves academic performance, promotes healthy social development and supports working parents. The families of New York State deserve better than our current approach to afterschool: a patchwork of poorly coordinated programs that does not reflect the reality that learning and personal development happen in times, places and ways that go beyond the traditional school day.

State policymakers have an essential role to play in making change happen. Polls consistently show public support in New York State for universal access to high-quality afterschool programs. It will take strong leadership for the state to address the critical task of creating a comprehensive, well-funded afterschool system that works for all of our young people and their families.

¹ Fight Crime: Invest in Kids New York. "New York's After-School Choice: The Prime Time for Juvenile Crime or Youth Enrichment and Achievement". 2002.