



New York State Afterschool Network
TESTIMONY to the GOVERNOR'S EDUCATION REFORM COMMISSION
October 24, 2012
Nora Niedzielski-Eichner, Executive Director

High quality programs offered outside the regular school day can help close the achievement gap and bring community resources into struggling schools. As the Commission considers its mission of improving the quality of education New York provides to its students, the New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN) urges the Commission to recommend increasing access to expanded learning opportunities (ELOs) and investing in infrastructure that supports high quality partnerships among out-of-school-time programs, school districts, and other community providers as core strategies.

Appended to this testimony is a report NYSAN recently issued which reviews the literature on the impacts of high-quality ELOs on student achievement, school completion, and family engagement, and concludes that high-quality ELOs have strong potential to contribute to school reform efforts. Recent studies have found that participation in high-quality afterschool programs can increase graduation rates, raise grades and test scores in core subjects, and improve school attendance. While these effects are likely partially due to increased time spent on academic subjects through both homework help and curriculum-based program activities, research has also found that afterschool and summer programs have been very successful in developing social and emotional skills such as resilience, problem-solving, persistence, and relationship-building with adults and peers. As economics and education research has increasingly pointed to the importance of these types of social-emotional skills for both short- and long-term positive life outcomes, New York's education system may benefit from increased engagement with ELOs who are successfully fostering these skills in their students.

One key element of a student's success is their engagement with school, often driven by a passion for something they are studying or aspire to be. The Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) panel at your Long Island hearing really drove home the necessity of project-based learning for sparking that passion for STEM in students, and project-based learning is an approach at which ELOs excel. ELOs have the time, community connections, and low student-to-staff ratios that permit the hands-on activities, guided student self-direction, and open-ended exploration necessary for intensive project-based learning in any field. Project-based learning through ELOs have been used successfully for credit-recovery for high school students in New Hampshire and elsewhere. It can engage students from the earliest grades through high school not only in their afterschool program, but also in their classrooms, as their newly sparked curiosity spills over into the traditional school day.

ELOs bring resources from the community into students' lives, whether in the form of local scientists or artists who come in to share their skills through project-based learning or local mentors who know just the right words to reach struggling students and assure them that they, too, have bright futures with a little hard work. ELOs are often run by, or have relationships with,

Promoting young people's safety, learning, and healthy development outside the traditional classroom.

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multi-service community agencies, so that the ELO becomes an entry point for health services, counseling, food assistance, and many other social services. ELOs also bring these community resources into the schools with which they partner, resources which can be tremendous assets to high-needs schools.

ELOs can also be quite successful at bringing a very crucial sector of the community into the school—parents and families. ELOs typically operate during hours that make them more accessible to working parents than the traditional school day, and parents who struggled in school themselves may find an afterschool program a more approachable place to get involved. Many ELOs plan substantial outreach activities and services for the families of their students; programs funded by 21st Century Community Learning Centers funds are required to do so. For schools looking to increase family engagement, a strong partnership with an ELO can build successful relationships that extend through the ELO into the school.

To maximize the benefits of ELOs to New York’s students, particularly those attending high-need, low-wealth school districts, we ask the Commission to consider two recommendations:

Expand access to ELOs: New York State currently supports ELOs through three major funding streams: Advantage After School, Extended School Day / School Violence Prevention, and Youth Development and Delinquency Prevention and Special Delinquency Prevention Program. The federally-funded 21st Century Community Learning Centers program is also administered by the state. All of these programs have seen substantial cuts in recent years, driven by the same economic downturn that has caused student and family need to rise.

These funding streams form the backbone of high- quality ELOs across the state. With that core support, ELOs can enrich and expand the services offered through volunteers—as the 21st Century program in Hudson has done, working with a retired businesswoman and local videographers to create specialized programs in STEM for girls and video production—and foundation and community funding—as the Arts and Literacy Program in Brooklyn and Queens has done, using foundation funds to develop a substantial art therapy program that addresses students’ mental health issues. Without sufficient core support, however, programs very often close their doors entirely or dwindle, serving fewer students and able to offer fewer of the kinds of high-quality activities that push students’ personal development and academic achievement. We ask the Commission to recommend expansion of funding streams for ELOs, so that more students can have the opportunities for academic and personal growth that come from participation in high-quality programs.

Build a more coordinated, higher-quality system: New York has done a tremendous amount to advance quality in its afterschool programs over the last several years, but work remains to be done. NYSAN members worked together over several years to develop and refine a Quality Self-Assessment (QSA) Tool, which out-of-school-time programs use to drive the improvements identified through research as most crucial for program quality. The QSA tool and its framework for quality has been incorporated into the Request for Proposals process for federal, state, and local funding streams in New York and widely adopted by programs across the state.

Networks and Neighborhoods: NYSAN believes strongly in the value of coordinated networks as mechanisms to improve the overall quality of services offered to students. We are ourselves a network of networks, and we are in continual conversation with our Regional Networks and other partners to learn about and share challenges and best practices. In the second addendum to this testimony, you will find copies of the testimonies submitted by NYSAN's Regional Networks to this Commission, which highlight specific local successes and concerns.

NYSAN requests the Commission consider increased support for city and regional strategic planning initiatives such as the Rochester After-School Plan and Model (see attached testimony from the Greater Rochester After-School Alliance (GRASA)), that seek to identify resources to expand access to ELOs in underserved neighborhoods, set expectations for school leadership and community-based organizations around resource sharing, and identify locally driven quality and growth goals. National research has found many benefits from increased coordination between ELO providers and between ELO providers and other parts of the education and community services sectors.

Such initiatives could be a venue for addressing common resource challenges, raised in some of the attached Regional Network testimony, such as transportation to and from afterschool programs and the use of space in school buildings outside of school hours. As school districts face difficult budget choices, they struggle to share these resources without charging programs fees the programs cannot afford. This can have the effect of closing off access to a valuable tool for academic and personal growth for the students and schools that might benefit most.

NYSAN also supports the expansion, through state funding and private organizations, of initiatives that coordinate multiple types of services within a school, neighborhood or city, such as community schools, Beacons, STRIVE, Say Yes, and the recently proposed Department of Health initiative based on the federal Promise Neighborhoods program. Many NYSAN members are already active in such initiatives in their communities, and in some cases a Regional Network has also taken a role as a representative of the out-of-school-time field in the area. We hope that the Commission will support such coordination initiatives and encourage the active participation of community-based organizations with ELO experience, many of whom are already working together through their Regional Networks to increase local program quality and coordination.

Data systems: As in other parts of the education field, a core component of a truly high-quality system is the ability to track and share data on both the program and the participating students. Collecting and analyzing ELO data has the potential to drive targeted quality improvements when data reveals an opportunity for intervention and also to support long-term growth in evidence-based practices based on longitudinal data. Although such work has not been done to date at the state-wide level, a number of cities nationwide, including New York City's Department of Community and Youth Development, have created ways of tracking ELO data. Other New York agencies and Regional Networks are currently investigating how to expand or develop local or program-specific data systems. There is a real opportunity at this time for New York State to take the lead and develop a statewide ELO data system. Doing so would reduce duplicative expenditures by different government bodies, simplify data tracking for programs interested in better measuring quality, and prevent a repetition of some of the state's earlier experiences with

building siloed data systems that ultimately proved incompatible when they needed to exchange data with other systems.

One of the most important elements of a high quality ELO is strong alignment and constant communication between an ELO's school and community-based partners. With proper permissions, sharing data about attendance, behavior problems, family issues, academic challenges, new interests, and test scores back and forth between the partners can help both in-school and out-of-school staff more effectively meet students' needs. Compatibility between New York's new P-20 educational data system, and any ELO data systems, whether local or statewide, is key to overall system quality goals, and the P-20 system should incorporate measures and interfaces related to out-of-school-time programs.

QUALITYstarsNY: NYSAN has built on its history of work around quality to develop School Age Child Care Standards for the *QUALITYstarsNY* child care rating and improvement system. As the Winning Beginning NY Coalition, of which NYSAN is a member, and others have testified, the *QUALITYstarsNY* system puts forward a rigorous framework for program quality, and will assist organizations to move toward those goals. Having school aged child care providers, which includes ELOs that primarily serve students under the age of 13, incorporated into a fully funded *QUALITYstarsNY* system will drive important increases in program quality. We ask the Commission to support the ongoing development of *QUALITYstarsNY*, and ensure that easy system interfaces between *QUALITYstarsNY*, the P-20 educational data system, and any other statewide data systems that include ELOs are a design priority.

NYSAN's member organizations and Regional Networks will continue to work to bring together schools and community organizations in partnership to develop high-quality ELOs for New York's students. We believe that increased core support and infrastructure support for coordination initiatives will efficiently leverage existing work to develop and sustain quality in New York—and quality will drive improved student outcomes. High-quality school-community partnerships have strong potential to help achieve the Governor's aim of having all students graduate high school "college and career ready," and we appreciate the Commission's consideration of ways to strengthen the work already being done across the state.

NYSAN would be happy to provide any additional information of interest. Please contact Nora Niedzielski-Eichner, Executive Director, at neichner@nysan.org or 646-943-8671.

The New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN) is a public-private partnership dedicated to promoting young people's safety, learning, and healthy development by increasing the quality and availability of programs available outside the traditional classroom. The positions taken and statements set forth in this document do not necessarily represent the views of all NYSAN members.



Appendix A

Testimony to the Governor's Education Reform Commission by
the Regional Networks affiliated with the New York State Afterschool Network

1. Greater Rochester After-School Alliance
2. Hudson Valley Afterschool Network
3. North Country Afterschool Network
4. Central New York Out of School Time Network
5. Expanded Learning Network of the Southern Tier
6. Afterschool Network of Western New York



October 22, 2012

Dear Members of the Governor's Education Reform Commission:

The Greater Rochester After-School Alliance's (GRASA) mission is to strengthen the quality, quantity, and accessibility of out-of-school-time programs in Monroe County for school-age youth through community collaboration. GRASA is an initiative of Rochester Area Community Foundation and is a volunteer committee made up of funders, policymakers, researchers, and family and provider representatives. GRASA's vision is that every school-aged youth in our community (who chooses) participates in high quality out-of-school-time programming. We define school-age youth as those of an age typically eligible for Kindergarten through 12th grade. GRASA serves a community that includes the City of Rochester, which has the 7th highest rate of child poverty in the nation. More than half of Rochester's children live in poverty. In Monroe County, one in every four kids lives below the poverty line.

In pursuit of our mission, GRASA has formed many significant public and private partnerships. Members include: the Rochester City School District, Rochester-Monroe County Youth Bureau, the City of Rochester, the United Way of Greater Rochester, the Youth Services Quality Council, Children's Institute, The Children's Agenda, the Early Childhood Education Quality Council, the Boys & Girls Club of Rochester, Nazareth College, Council on Accreditation, the Greater Rochester Summer Learning Association, and the Community Foundation, among others.

Out-of-school-time programming includes before-school, after-school, summer learning, and expanded learning programs. These out-of-school-time opportunities can be provided by school districts in partnership with community organizations; by child care centers; or by community partners.

Out-of-school-time programs have been evaluated and proven to provide social-emotional skills, academic supports, and positive youth development that benefit students. Out-of-school-time programs help students become ready for college and career. Out-of-school-time programs help students become engaged and active citizens. Programs align with and complement but do not replicate the school day. Out-of-school-time programs keep kids safe. They help prevent crime, drug use, and teen pregnancy while also reducing the high school dropout rate and providing employment for many community members. The Afterschool Alliance estimates that after-school program sites in New York State employ 50,000 staff.

Out-of-school-time programs support working families. Parents count on out-of-school-time programs to keep their kids safe and supervised while they are at work. With nearly 8 in 10 mothers of school-age children working, out-of-school-time programs help working families by providing a safe, supervised, constructive environment for children during the after-school hours

and increase employee productivity in the workplace by providing parents with peace of mind. Out-of-school-time programs engage families and parents in program development and planning. Out-of-school-time programs have been shown to improve school engagement and improve school-day attendance (Public/Private Ventures, 2011). Support of and integration of community-school collaborative programming is a significant bridge to a comprehensive and cohesive system of student and learning supports. Learning time is increased through a full range of enrichment opportunities before or after the school day and during the summer.

The City of Rochester has a high-needs school district. The Rochester City School District is an urban, public school district serving more than 30,000 students in grades PreK-12. Within New York State, the Rochester City School District has the largest percentage of minority students (89%), the highest percentage of students living below the poverty line (83.6%), and the lowest graduation rate (45.5%) among the "big five" state cities. In 2008 the Mayor of Rochester and the Superintendent of the Rochester City School District convened the Rochester After-School Task Force with facilitation by The After School Corporation. Together the task force members created the Rochester After-School Plan and Model which is the guiding framework for high-quality out-of-school-time programming in our community.

In 2010, The Children's Agenda and the Center for Governmental Research determined that 26% of Rochester's children age 6-17 living in working family homes have a place they can go to after school at least three days a week, but only 11% are attending programs that meet the minimum quality standards outlined in the Rochester After-School Plan and Model. 17,266 children and youth age 6-17 in the City of Rochester are on their own most days after school. Of those with somewhere to go, only 2,505 are attending programs that meet standards.

In order to strengthen the quality, quantity, and accessibility of out-of-school-time programs in our community, GRASA has: conducted research, including inventories of after-school programs; surveyed parents and youth on need and preferences; identified a set of nationally recognized standards for quality programming to serve as a guide for local programs; instituted a process to assess the quality of after-school programs community-wide in a low-stakes assessment; helped convene the Rochester After-School Task Force; endorsed program accreditation and an after-school professional credentialing process; supported development of a system-wide capacity building project for professional development of youth workers; and served as a regional network affiliate of the New York State After-School Network (NYSAN).

GRASA is also creating a city-wide system of comprehensive out-of-school-time programming for school-age youth. The community's efforts were recognized by the National League of Cities in a 2011 report, "Municipal Leadership for Afterschool: Citywide Approaches Spreading Across the Country," which identified 27 cities that are among the most advanced in their efforts to coordinate after-school opportunities for children and youth. GRASA members continue to tap the expertise of others in systems building, in consultation with NYSAN, the National League of Cities, the Providence After-School Alliance, and the Collaborative for Building After School Systems.

GRASA and the Community Foundation are currently engaged in an innovative partnership with the Ford Foundation and the Rochester City School District to expand learning in two city school sites. This initiative is aimed at leveling the playing field for low-income students in low-performing city schools by exposing them to the enrichment opportunities that their higher-income peers routinely access. The expanded learning sites blend the best of after-school with the best of academics in order to offer students a more engaging, hands-on learning experience. Students benefit from the positive youth development focus, experiential learning strategies, and family and community connections of community-based providers who partner

with the schools to provide a fuller, more enriching school experience. The Community Foundation also partners with the Wallace Foundation and the Rochester City School District on the Wallace Summer Learning Demonstration, a randomized-control study with the RAND Corporation that analyzes the lasting impacts of enriched summer learning on rising fourth graders. Students in the summer initiative receive academic remediation in the morning followed by community-provided enrichment and value added learning activities in the afternoon in order to level the playing field and stem summer learning loss.

GRASA is rich in history, partnerships, and activities, but we cannot do this important work alone. We rely on the resources of the state and federal government to make access to high-quality programs possible. The local community is fortunate to have more than \$4 million in private support for out-of-school-time programs provided through the United Way of Greater Rochester and the Community Foundation. Local philanthropists who are passionate about this community and about out-of-school-time programs have made this funding possible. But it is not enough. Only through significant government funding of out-of-school-time programs can many of Rochester's children and youth access the high-quality programming currently available. And only through significant future government investment can we expand the number of children and youth served by high quality out-of-school-time programs. Funding for Advantage Afterschool, Extended Day / School Violence Prevention, and Youth Development / Delinquency Prevention (YDDP) and Special Delinquency Prevention Programs (SDPP) make these programs possible. We urge state leaders to increase their commitment to these essential funding streams in order to expand provision of high-quality programming in the communities of greater Rochester where the need is so great.

In order to further our work with the Rochester City School District on expanded learning school reform, we urge the state to provide professional development resources related to the Common Core Standards to community-based out-of-school-time program providers. We also ask for resources to support joint professional development opportunities for teachers and expanded learning staff in order to plan, develop, and deliver highly coordinated and complementary programming that prepares students for college and career.

Thank you for your attention to the important matter of improving educational outcomes through development of student growth in social-emotional and academic skills – proven benefits of high-quality out-of-school-time programs. Please let me know if I can provide additional information regarding the community of greater Rochester and our collaborative efforts in strengthening access to and quality of the out-of-school-time experience for local children and youth.

Sincerely,



Mairéad Hartmann
Program Officer, Rochester Area Community Foundation
Co-Chair, Greater Rochester After-School Alliance
Executive Committee Member, New York State Afterschool Network

GREAT FUTURES START HERE.



Testimony to the New NY Education Reform Commission
September 10, 2012
Newburgh, NY

Submitted by: Krysta Murray, M.S.Ed
Education Coordinator, Boys & Girls Club of Newburgh
Steering Committee Member, Hudson Valley Afterschool Network (HVAN),
a regional network of the New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN)

Good Afternoon, I'd like to thank the Commission and its esteemed members for the opportunity to share testimony today about the critical role of afterschool programs in New York State. My name is Krysta Murray and I am the Education Coordinator at the Boys & Girls Club of Newburgh. The Boys & Girls Club of Newburgh believes that the most effective way to eliminate poverty and violence in our community is through the education of our young people. TAP programs are specifically designed to improve academic achievement and college and career readiness in students located in high-need, low-income school communities.

The Boys & Girls Club of Newburgh assists students in growing academically by helping build skills in English language arts and math with the overall goal of passing the New York State Standardized Assessment exams. TAP participants receive academic instruction that enriches the school day, supports school district curriculum and implements a research based curriculum. We also provide students with 45 minutes of supervised homework help and track homework completion on a daily basis. The academic portion of TAP enables students to participate in meaningful, hands on activities that add value to what students learn during the school day. We support the Newburgh Enlarged School District by ensuring that students practice the skills and achieve the outcomes outlined by school district curriculum and state standards. We implement programs and assessment practices that reflect the Common Core Learning Standards and are designed using the Balanced Literacy Framework and STEM learning. Our teen program, Diplomas to Degrees, offers SAT preparation, Regents review, life skills and technology development, as well as career and college exploration opportunities. It is

designed to ensure that our students are eligible and equipped for college enrollment, workforce entrance and future success. Our most recent assessment results revealed that students with regular daily attendance and consistent homework completion, paired with monitoring student progress, helped 67% of our students improve their assessment scores.

The Boys & Girls Club of Newburgh also assists in the socio-emotional development of our students. TAP offers students access to positive youth development activities in the areas of science and technology, leadership development, arts and culture, and sports and recreation. This rich array of activities is designed to foster talent and provide unique opportunities not otherwise available to students in our community. TAP provides a safe and nurturing environment and provides an alternative to the negative influences of their environment. We've watched our students build self-esteem, learn positive behavior, develop a sense of self, and discover talents. We provide them with the support they need by staffing teachers, interns, volunteers and staff that serve as role models and teach them how to build positive relationships. In addition, the Boys & Girls Club of Newburgh created a Parent Ambassador Program in order to encourage parental involvement, teach parents how to support student learning, and encourage participation in our community events and fundraising activities.

The Mission of the Boys & Girls Club is "to enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens." The Boys & Girls Club of Newburgh fulfills this mission through quality afterschool programs in the areas of Academics, Athletics, and Art to students of the Newburgh Enlarged School District. These programs run each school day, from 2:00pm-6:00pm, the hours when young people are more likely to participate in juvenile crimes and other harmful activities if left unsupervised. The success of afterschool programs in high-need, low-income school communities relies heavily on the support of the community and open communication with local school districts.

The Boys & Girls Club of Newburgh supports the efforts of the Newburgh Enlarged School District and we believe that cooperation and collaboration between the two are vital for student success. The Boys & Girls Club of Newburgh is fortunate to work directly with and receive support from the local school district at many levels; however, it is important that we continue to build upon this relationship to ensure that it's mutually beneficial. We directly support the Newburgh Enlarged School District by providing a seamless transition from the school day into The Afterschool Project. We support the school district curriculum, plan according to state standards, and implement programs and assessment practices that reflect the

Common Core Learning Standards. It's important that afterschool programs and school districts understand each other's priorities and goals. Afterschool leaders must clearly demonstrate how they support their local school district and describe the benefits of their programs. Afterschool programs must make the time to build relationships with local schools, administrators, teachers, and principals. School districts can specifically improve their relationship with afterschool programs by allowing access to curriculum, student test scores, school resources, school events and professional development opportunities.

Support from New York State and the New York State Department of Education is essential in the growth and success of our programs in high-need, low-income school communities. Aside from the clear need for funding for our programs, data sharing is crucial. Afterschool programs such as TAP would benefit from receiving information about priority schools in our district and having access to school report cards prior to program planning. In addition, standardized test scores must be readily available so that we can track student progress and evaluate our programs and practices.

The Boys & Girls Club believes that investing in quality afterschool programs in high-need, low-income school communities improves academic achievement and college and career readiness. The Afterschool Project at the Boys & Girls Club of Newburgh is ready to work with the community, the school district, and the state to give students the foundation they need for success in school and to achieve a higher quality of life. We strongly urge Governor Cuomo and the New NY Education Reform Commission, to help strengthen the role of afterschool programs in New York State.

Thank you.

Testimony to the Governor's Education Reform Commission
September 20, 2012

Rebecca Reed
Executive Director – Community Engagement, The Watertown Family YMCA
North Country Afterschool Network (NCAN)
New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN)

I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony to the Governor's Education Reform Commission, and thank the Commission members for their commitment to hearing from all parts of New York State.

Our Successes

The Watertown Family YMCA, offers School Age Child Care for youth K – 5th grade in 20 schools across 8 school districts. We also offer afterschool programs in two middle schools. We serve between 600 and 700 youth on a daily basis.

Our afterschool and summer programs play a crucial role in the education of our students. Living in a predominantly rural area of the state, our students have limited access to enrichment activities and programs that are more common in urban and suburban regions. Our out-of-school time programs are an opportunity to expand students' horizons, excite their curiosity, and engage their bodies and minds in new and challenging experiences. Rather than going home alone to watch television, our students have the opportunity to grow and learn during the hours from 3 to 6 pm. We provide experiential learning opportunities that help support school day academics. This includes robotics, cooking clubs, arts, and health and wellness programs. This is done in an atmosphere of positive peer to peer and positive adult interactions.

As our local school systems struggle with fiscal challenges and strive to meet the increasing expectations for focused time on math and reading, our programs provide an opportunity to diversify our students' educations by engaging them with civics, science, and the arts in addition to our support for their academic growth in math and reading. Our youth have a tremendous range of talents, not all of which find easy expression in a traditional classroom. By providing students with a safe place to explore and develop their strengths, we help them gain confidence, develop higher expectations for themselves, and increase their engagement with school as well as afterschool.

In the General Brown School District they tracked youth attending afterschool programs. The data showed that students involved in afterschool program improved ELA scores and improved attendance rates. Through extensive research, The Search Institute has proven that there are 40 developmental assets that help youth transform into adults who are healthy, caring and responsible. Quality out of school time programs are an essential element in this transformation.

Our Challenges

The one of the greatest challenge that we face in effectively serving our students is transportation. Given the size and rural nature of the area we serve, students may face an insurmountable barrier to participation if free transportation is not provided by the program. Walking home is not an option when student needs to travel 10 miles or more, and parents may work too far in another direction to be able to pick them up in a timely fashion. Students thus ride the bus home from school as their only alternative, and miss out on the enrichment that our programs provide. Few school districts are able to provide transportation for youth in afterschool programs. In our area, afterschool and summer programs are an integral part of a well-rounded students' education, and I would ask that the Commission consider ways that the specific challenges of rural areas when it comes to transportation for out-of-school-time activities could be addressed.

We know that high-quality programs are run by high-quality staff, and thus professional development opportunities are crucial to building exemplary programs. It can be challenging to find the needed programs here in the North Country, however, and staff and programs often incur the expense of traveling to larger cities or bringing in an outside trainer. Community-based organizations would benefit from being able to attend appropriate school district professional development trainings, particularly as afterschool and summer programs are looking to be aligned with the Common Core State Standards in their activity planning. I would ask that the Commission consider ways that existing resources supporting professional development and curriculum design can be made available to out-of-school-time partners.

Given that our programs meet a tremendous need for enrichment that it is difficult for parents and students to fill in other ways in our region, I of course urge the Commission to consider expanding funding streams, such as Advantage Afterschool, that allow us to meet those needs. More students would take advantage of the skills development, mentorship, peer socialization, hands-on activities, tutoring, and athletics that our programs provide if we were able to offer more programs.

Finally, I urge the Commission to consider the importance of a supporting students' social-emotional growth as well their academic growth to achieve a truly high-quality education. Afterschool and summer programs offer important opportunities for students to develop leadership, resilience, social skills, and substantial adult relationships in ways that are not possible during the traditional school day. New York should incorporate afterschool programming into its vision for education reform, but it should look for these programs to accomplish different things than the school day. Our field has decades of experience in helping to develop the whole child, and that healthy development leads to better life outcomes, not just higher test scores.

Thank you again for your consideration of this testimony. I would be happy to answer any further questions. I can be reached at 315-755-2005 ext 418 or ymca_reed@yahoo.com.

Governor's Education Commission Out of School Time Testimony
Laurie Penney McGee, Booker T. Washington Community Center, Auburn, NY

My name is Laurie Penney McGee and I am the Executive Director at Booker T. Washington Community Center (BTW) in Auburn, NY. For over three years, I also served as the regional coordinator of the Central New York Out of School Time Network, of which I am currently a member. This fall, the Booker T. Washington Community Center will celebrate its 85th anniversary of service to the Auburn community. BTW provides free after-school services with an emphasis on serving the African American and low income communities in Cayuga County. The agency offers a myriad of programs for community members of all ages, including facilitated enrollment of health care, senior citizen programming and before and after school services for youth. Each year, BTW serves over 200 children and youth in grades K-12.

The mission of BTW is to assist the community in promoting civil liberties, justice and equality without regard to race, creed, color, sex, national origin, sexual preference, religion, disability or socio-economic status by offering families and individuals recreational, educational, developmental and cultural programs for all ages.

1. Booker T. Washington Community Center – Helping Students

BTW after school programs currently help students in a number of ways. Over the course of the year, BTW programs assist youth academically through daily homework, tutoring and enrichment activities. Through its partnership with Cayuga County Community College, college students provide youth with weekly tutoring and special events focused on specific learning outcomes. For example, students in the Criminal Justice program worked on science and math goals through a mock murder and forensic investigation. Other activities facilitated by college students, such as Martin Luther King Day and the Community Coat Drive have focused on history and civic engagement.

In order to address career and college readiness and promote the completion of high school and participation in higher education, high school students have the opportunity to engage in a College Prep program. Students attend college visits and tours and practice the college application and admission process.

BTW also offers many developmentally appropriate activities, including fitness and sports activities, music and dance, and martial arts programming. Social and emotional wellbeing is supported through a variety of activities, and the Center provides both snack and dinner to youth each day, with emphasis on healthy choices and life-long habits.

2. Student Needs

Students most need access to academic supports through after school tutoring and enrichment activities that are tied to their academic goals. At BTW's Advantage After School Program at Auburn High School, the Program Coordinator has on-line access to student progress reports, assignment grades, and

attendance reports. The coordinator utilizes the on-line system to partner struggling students with program teachers who can target the specific areas where students most need assistance. Program staff also work with students to address tardiness or absences in order to provide them with supports to stay in school. During the 2011-2012 school year, over 100 high school students participated in BTW's after school program. Once the school program ends at 6PM, students can continue to participate at BTW's evening program, where students have access to a computer lab for homework and research assistance.

BTW's program coordinator attends partnership meetings six times a year with the District Assistant Superintendent, a parent, and other after-school providers to share best practices and engage in program development. These regular meetings strengthen the relationship and close collaboration between the program staff and school personnel, allowing for constant communication and cooperation.

3. Recommendations

The state education system can help support students through the expansion of funding for after school programs. At this time, programs across the state maintain waiting lists of children who are not able to access the key services which after school programs provide. Consistent funding streams would allow providers to expand services, address waiting lists and develop strategic plans that could be flexible to meet changing community needs. Providing best practices, such as the close collaboration between the BTW after school program and the Auburn High School, could serve as a model for other agencies and school districts who could increase student achievement through similar partnerships.

Funding which covers the cost of transportation is critical for students who are excluded from programs because they do not have a ride home. Programs must also have the funding they need to provide supports for children and youth with disabilities who could benefit greatly from the inclusive recreation and educational activities that programs provide. It is essential that every child has the opportunity to grow and develop through their engagement in after school activities.

Sincerely,

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The following information was provided by Katie Moran, Executive Director of Partnership for Results in Auburn, NY:

Partnership for Results after school programs.

1. How is program currently helping students: Programs are offered at 2 rural districts and 3 Title I schools in Auburn. In all districts the students are offered tutoring, homework help and academic skill building. As an SES provider we have been able to play a dual role in some of the schools. The enrichment activities include activities that also provide academic enrichment – examples: students in the “Restaurant” program help to prepare a meal, but also learn about nutrition and do computer research on various ethnic foods and recipes; an event was planned around learning about the Great Barrier Reef and conservation efforts related to it. The event included a meal and a live connection to scientists who were working at the Great Barrier Reef and who talked about their work there. Students are often able to visit local attractions and learn about local history that they might not otherwise do. We maintain good communications with school day staff and have access to report cards and standardized test scores and use them to assess student academic weaknesses and to plan their after school academic program.

What do students need most – this covers a wide spectrum. Many of the students have very basic needs with which we can help – need for nutritious snacks and dinner, need for access to role models and caring adults, need for academic assistance. Some students are in need of socialization and we provide group work and counseling with mental health counselors to students who have emotional issues. Students with academic problems in particular are recruited.

What could the state education system do? We have worked for 10 years providing after school programs and after school academic help. We are still looking for the magic bullet that will result in us seeing high academic improvement in all students in the program. Perhaps State Education could provide more training or more assistance in some way with the academic portion of after school programs (“Education mentors” available to programs, information on learning and best practices in providing after school help, workshops on skill building).

Testimony before the Education Reform Commission, August 8, 2012

Shelley Lester, Enrichment Coordinator, Spencer-Van Etten Central School District

Steering Committee Member of the Expanded Learning Network of the Southern Tier (ELNoST), a regional chapter of New York State After-school Network (NYSAN)

Good Afternoon, my name is Shelley Lester. I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in today's important panel discussion and I thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

The Spencer-Van Etten Central School District has been a recipient of two Twenty First Century Community Learning Centers Grants. We were funded in Round One and are currently funded in Round Four as part of B.A.S.E. Camp One which funds four school districts, Bradford, Odessa – Montour, Spencer –Van Etten, and Watkins Glen. These schools districts work together in a partnership to provide high quality expanded learning programming with the goal of increasing student achievement, parent involvement, and increasing students' exposure and preparedness for college and career.

My testimony today will highlight our expanded learning programs' progress toward the Commission's objectives of :

- Improving Student Achievement**
- College and Career Readiness**
- Access to high quality educational programs**
- Parental engagement**

As the process of education reform goes forward in New York State, consideration of the importance of expanded learning programs and their contribution to student achievement is a must.

Expanded learning programs provide solid support for students in the areas of academic achievement and socio-emotional development. In ten years of expanding learning programs in our school district students have been exposed to programs that have enhanced their self- confidence and exposed them to possibilities for their future that they may never have known existed otherwise. Our programs operate for three hours each day during the school year, providing daily academic support. Our summer program consists of five weeks with a minimum of six programming hours a day. Summer programming is designed to immerse students in educational opportunities such as: career academies, character education, and STEM programming.

Expanded learning programs in our district have provided a solid foundation of academic and socio-emotional support for students including:

- Building solid relationships with school district faculty, students from other grade levels, including high school and college students who role model positive student behaviors. We also have fostered positive relationships with other students from our partnering school districts through planned joint activities.**

- Providing high quality enrichment programming that compliments school-day curriculum, such as: Robotics, Wild Wetlands (environmental science), full length dramatic productions, “Garden Gourmets” (a culinary arts program with a history focus). These programs contributed to increased ELA Grades from Fall to Spring for the 2010 – 2011 school year with 43.94 % of our students improving their ELA Grades by at least one full letter grade, compared to the state average of 39.43%.
- Exposing students to college through campus visits, college workshops, and an adapted application process in the middle school years.
- Introducing students to various future career opportunities through visits to local businesses, guest speakers, career workshops, and panels.
- Expanding and enhancing students’ access to education throughout the summer months through high quality educational summer programming.
- Engaging families through a successful family engagement program that offers several family literacy events throughout the year as well as culminating events celebrating project –based student work.
- Creating opportunities for parents to become involved such as: Parent Teacher Organization’s, volunteering in the classroom, workshops offered for parents and students to take together, such as water/boat safety lessons, first aid and CPR, etc.

The success of our expanding learning programs can be measured in a number of ways:

- As I mentioned above our core of strong enrichment activities contributed to increased ELA Grades from Fall to Spring for the 2010-2011 school year with 43.94% of our students improving their ELA grades by at least one full letter, compared to the state average of 39.43%
- In teacher surveys for the 2010-2011 academic year, teachers reported that 74% of regular attendees improved their academic performance and 62% of our regular attendees improved their class room behavior, while 69% improved in completing homework to satisfactory standards.
- Engaged parents expressing strong support for our program. One parent stated *“Please make sure this program continues and grows, as I am sure I’m not the only parent who has appreciated this opportunity so much. I’m so grateful for my daughter being in a safe place, and making our lives so much richer!”* Yet another parent shared these sentiments *“Thank you for bringing these great opportunities to our students! My daughter has grown leaps and bounds through your program and the positive influence of your staff. She has come out of her shell in a very wonderful way. She is becoming stronger and more confident in many ways including relationships with her peers, class room assignments and general everyday life situations. I feel that being a part of the P.A.V.E. program (Parents, Afterschool, Volunteers, and Enrichment) is helping her through the difficult middle school pre-teen years.”*

In a decade of coordinating programs for students I have witnessed many success stories in which the goals and outcomes were met and program expectations were exceeded. These stories are not always tracked by numerical data, but they are none the less real for the students and families living them.

As I will discuss further below, our community partners and our school districts work very closely together to create our expanded learning program. Through this program, we provide academic enrichment, college and career readiness, and family engagement opportunities for our students and families that our districts alone could not.

Recommendations to consider

Create close school and community partnerships.

My school district could be considered a model for positive change in the alignment of school day and expanded learning programs. Spencer –Van Etten Central School District restructured its budget to provide expanded learning programming during the gap years between our Twenty First Century Community Learning Center Round One grant and our Round Four grant.

Funding was committed to allow for intentional project- based learning programs, as well as homework and academic assistance for both the elementary and middle schools, because the district recognized that these opportunities were too valuable for their students to lose.

With the award of the round four Twenty First Century Community Learning Centers Grant, the school district chose to employ an Enrichment Coordinator as well as a Family Engagement Coordinator, rather than have these positions filled by a community-based partner in a more traditional grant-based format. This structure ensures “ownership,” if you will, by the district. Expanded learning programs are not seen as an outside program by administration, faculty, and staff. This sense of ownership promotes a holistic approach to programming and helps to further the success of aligning expanded learning with school-day curriculum and the common core standards; this is evidenced by the results of Spencer-Van Etten’s performance as previously referenced.

In these times of budget gaps and decreased federal and state aid, it is extremely important to look at solid programs that have achieved goals of improved student achievement and keep them funded so that all students regardless of geographic location have a chance to benefit. New York should also look to incorporate solid expanded learning practices in its recommendations for how New York can support districts struggling to achieve college and career readiness for their students. Our experience has shown that expanded learning programs are a key part of our progress toward the goal.

Respond to rural needs.

The distribution of grant funding and financial allocations should be reviewed to take into account the difficult challenges faced by New York State’s rural students, such as geographic isolation, complex issues related to transportation and the lack of easily accessible cultural opportunities. The isolation of our rural students can be a tremendous barrier to college and career readiness, as they may lack familiarity with the many options that other might take for granted. Transportation is an ongoing challenge, and one that can further students’ isolation if they cannot find a way to attend the programs that we, and other programs like ours, have made available to provide enrichment activities.

Rural areas sometimes have different costs to meet our students' needs, and they sometimes have different needs from their urban and suburban counterparts. Developing a sufficient network of school and community partners with a wide variety of enrichment activities to offer can be a challenge as well especially as district budgets have grown tighter and tighter. New York State should develop a sustainable funding mechanism for expanded learning programs in rural areas of the state that recognizes these particular challenges and the key role of expanded learning programs in meeting the needs of rural students.

I am grateful that the Governor has committed to reforming our state's education system and replacing out dated practices with those that are needed by the students who will learn grow and eventually become the productive citizens and leaders of the twenty-first century. Continuing to integrate expanded learning programs with the traditional school day format will benefit all our students in need of twenty-first century skills to succeed in a twenty-first century world.

After School Network of Western New York

As our community is embarking on this bold and wide ranging education reform effort that seeks to dramatically improve student outcomes, the After-school Network of Western N.Y. respectfully requests that we pay strong attention to the power and impact of quality out of school time programming, as learning and developing are not limited to the 8-3 hours.

More and more research studies are released every year that document the value of out of school time programs.

Out of school time programs support student academic achievement and socio-emotional development. They compliment and align with the school day, yet have the ability to go beyond what is possible in the classroom

They provide space and time for creative and exciting hands on enrichment that translates well to real life experiences. They deepen students understanding of their academic subjects and increase school and community connectedness.

Out of school time needs to be a core strategy to help close the achievement gap and strengthen our community.

Out of school time programs provide a safe, responsible, productive and caring environment during hours when a large portion of our youth are un or under supervised.

*They improve attendance

*They improve student achievement

* They assist in efforts to prevent crime, drug use and teen pregnancy

* They improve physical and mental health outcomes

* Provide an outlet for student voice and leadership

*Are cost effective

* Provide working families with the support and level of comfort they need to balance work and family life

Our community has high quality out of school time resources and we ask that the State educational reform efforts be inclusive of out of school time strategies by supporting coordination and systems building around out of school time, by encouraging true collaboration between the schools and community based organization and by including them in both the planning process and the roll out of the reform.

Thanks for your time and attention

Kim Luce

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