



Recovery, Response, and Resilience: Leveraging Afterschool and Community Schools to Address Learning Loss in New York

As of April 8, 2021

COVID-19 has presented unprecedented obstacles to students' learning, safety, health, and overall well-being. Amid the pandemic, students continue to face extended months of learning loss, widening existing academic and achievement gaps for disadvantaged students, many who are black, indigenous, people of color, and those who are most-at-risk during school closures and remote learning. This learning loss was further exacerbated by the lack of access to afterschool, summer, and expanded learning opportunities, widening the disparities in support for those who had fewer educational opportunities before the pandemic. Many young people, especially those in underserved and impoverished communities, have also experienced significant poverty and trauma resulting from loss and/or grief. 4,200 children in New York--many who are students of color-- lost a parent or guardian to COVID-19 between March and July 2020, and 325,000 children were pushed into or near poverty because of COVID.¹

New York's local, state, and community leaders are faced with important decisions about how to support young people and their families, and those who educate and care for them. Students, including those who need the most support, will need teachers, afterschool youth development professionals, and other program leaders who have the ability to teach academic content while engaging students through their interests and specialized needs. They will need more wraparound support to help them build hope today and resilience towards the future. **Leveraging the role of afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs, and building on the impact of expanded learning opportunities through the community schools strategy, can help guarantee recovery and future academic and developmental success for New York's children, youth, and families.**

GUIDING PRINCIPLE: As the pandemic continues and as summer approaches, it is clear that families, young people and schools need broader community support to safely meet the academic and socio-emotional needs across the state. Youth development community-based organizations and programs, who have been largely left out of COVID-19 relief funding, have quickly adapted their services since the onset of the pandemic to meet the needs of young people and families they are deeply connected to. It will take strong commitments, resources, and coordinated efforts to ensure that youth have the support they need to catch up and re-engage effectively in school and community life. In order to do that, we need to be smarter, flexible, and more efficient in the way we deliver critical services and programs to address learning loss.

- In many cases now, there are separate delivery systems for addressing the needs of New York's students and communities. The community schools strategy merges those systems, provides a return on the investment, and works in both urban and rural settings. Hence, community schools are uniquely positioned to tailor their approach to learning by addressing the academic and non-academic barriers facing students and their communities.

- The need to rebuild and strengthen the current afterschool infrastructure, which was fragile before the pandemic, towards a more robust system is paramount at this time. It is crucial that the afterschool system is strongly positioned to streamline opportunities and processes that would be core to ensuring efficient, effective, and adequate support to enhance, expand, and sustain these programs. The State must leverage the opportunity to

¹ <https://uhfnyc.org/news/article/uhf-report-4200-children-nys--lost-parent-covid-19/>

build a stronger and better afterschool infrastructure, and work towards universal afterschool by expanding equitable access to high-quality expanded learning opportunities.

Afterschool. Afterschool, summer, and other expanded learning programs have been crucial in helping young people and their families, especially amid the COVID-19 crisis: In spite of program disruptions caused by COVID-19, the vulnerability of the afterschool infrastructure, and the limited resources to work with, afterschool programs, many driven by passion and commitment to meet critical needs, continue to adapt high-quality programs to support youth and their families. Afterschool, summer, and expanded learning opportunities are a lifeline for working families, with deep reach in historically underserved communities. They address learning loss by providing access to high-quality, in-person, supplemental education and enrichment programs that serve a diverse range of students, especially those who need robust academic, social, and emotional supports. These programs are actively engaged, as trusted community partners, to meet families' basic needs amid COVID-19 by combating food insecurities, providing daily living and education essentials to families, and providing health, social, and emotional wellness services and support.

Community Schools. The pandemic has revealed that schools provide more than academic support for students and emphasizes how schools will need all the support they can get to reopen safely and address academic and non-academic issues that support students' overall wellbeing. Community schools increase access to medical and mental health care, expand learning opportunities through afterschool and summer programs, and provide parent/family engagement support to remove the academic, social, emotional, and mental barriers students face. As an intentional school transformation strategy that actively seeks and leverages participation from school and community leaders, community schools provide comprehensive youth development services to support youth and community development, thereby leading to improved student learning, stronger families, and healthier communities. Adopting the community schools model will empower schools and communities with the right tools and resources they need to confront academic, social-emotional, mental health, and other non-academic needs aggravated by the pandemic.

SUMMARY- PROPOSED USE OF FUNDS

Impact: More than 72,000 students and families, 4,000 programs, and 70,000 afterschool professionals statewide will receive critical supports through the allocation of the American Rescue Plan funds as outlined below.

Available from the ESSER III Fund (total of approximately \$9B): \$2.2B to support evidence-based interventions including afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs to address learning loss. These funds must be expended by September 2023.

Available funds to the state (\$627M): \$449M to address learning loss through the implementation of evidence-based interventions, such as summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs; \$89M each for "evidence-based comprehensive" afterschool programs and summer enrichment programs.

Available funds to local school districts (\$1.6B): 20% set-aside of ESSER III funds to local school districts' funds for activities to address learning loss.

State Funds Summary Proposal:

PROPOSAL	ESTIMATE	REACH	\$449M	\$89M-A	\$89M-S
Stabilization grants of at least \$2,000 per month and available up to 12 months	\$48M	2,000 programs	<input type="checkbox"/>		
COVID-19 adjustment fund for afterschool grantees	\$5.6M	66,000 students		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Afterschool Professionals Program for workforce supplemental wages and workforce retention and expansion efforts	\$200M	66,000 staff	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Restructuring the Afterschool Pathfinder website	\$50,000	4,000 programs			
Investment in the Educational Incentive Program	\$5.4M	4,320 staff	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Enhancing afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs	\$185M	18,500 additional students served for 5 years	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Recovery Summer and Learning Lab grants	TBD	TBD		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support for state afterschool network	\$1.78M	4,000+ programs		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TA support for community schools and community schools network	TBD	Community schools served statewide	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Data, research, and evaluation for afterschool and community schools	TBD	TBD	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Local School District Funds Proposal:

Utilizing the 20% set-aside to address learning loss, every school district should work with community based youth and family serving organizations to:

- provide comprehensive afterschool, summer learning/enrichment over at least the next 2 years in or near the school; AND provide wrap-around support services for the social, emotional, and physical well-being of children and youth; OR,
- transform the school into a community school with wrap-around services, adult education support, and comprehensive afterschool and summer opportunities

Recommendations to local school districts to address learning loss

We offer these recommendations to help local school districts effectively prioritize and implement equitable efforts to promote learning recovery:

1. **Utilize the community schools strategy** to provide crucial wraparound services to promote the social, emotional, and physical well-being of children and youth. Community schools are a collaborative strategy that organize community resources to best support the success of students. As an evidence-based intervention, the strategy is well-positioned to respond to many of the recommendations that are outlined below.
2. **School-community partnerships**
 - Utilize afterschool and summer programs to implement a “recovery summer” by integrating expanded learning programs as essential elements in learning recovery and social-emotional support (including trauma-informed practice) for students and families. This includes efforts to create or enhance a high-quality summer enrichment program with community partners.
 - Leverage partnerships with community based youth and family serving organizations to address learning loss, and provide enrichment and important wraparound services to support the whole child. This includes utilizing community resources (e.g. partnerships with libraries, museums, parks and recreation, youth bureaus, etc.) and school assets (e.g. buses to transport students to and from afterschool and summer programs) to maximize learning opportunities for students. This also includes contracting with afterschool providers to offer half-day or full-day programming to provide social emotional support, academics and tutoring, physical activity, mentoring, and other enrichment activities.
 - Prioritize STEM learning and engagement by leveraging afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs to support STEM education recovery. Afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs embrace hands-on STEM learning activities in their programming, inspiring student engagement and innovative learning opportunities that help support, broaden, and expand students’ STEM experience outside the traditional K-12 classroom.
 - Leverage school and community resources to provide support for struggling students and their families. Assess needs within the school community for access to basic necessities, food, supplies, devices/wifi, mental health supports, etc., and utilize new and existing partnerships to meet those needs.
 - **Collaborate with the state afterschool network, New York State Network for Youth Success and regional afterschool networks** to coordinate local capacity building and professional youth development resources for afterschool programs and providers.
3. **Prioritize comprehensive support** for students who have been historically marginalized and/or from disadvantaged backgrounds, including English-language learners, students from low-income communities, students with learning needs and disabilities and mental health needs, runaway and homeless youth, students in sparsely populated districts, and other students who need further supports beyond what is provided to catch up.

4. **Prioritize technological supports** including access to technological devices and broadband service for students, especially those involved in virtual learning.
5. **Invest in a curriculum that is responsive, adaptable, and sensitive** to addressing learning loss and appropriately adapts to different modalities of learning, including in-person, remote, and hybrid learning.
6. **Expand tutoring and mentoring** opportunities for students based on their individually identified needs through partnership with youth and family serving community-based organizations. Rigorous research provides strong evidence that a wide range of students who receive significant tutoring supports see large learning gains, including those who have fallen behind academically.²
7. **Focus on investments that address students' academic and non-academic needs**, including their social emotional and mental health support.
 - Partnership with school-based health centers, community behavioral health providers, and social workers
8. **Expand student and family engagement** opportunities
 - Increase families' access to resources - during the pandemic many families have found themselves in desperate situations.
 - Engage parents, students, and youth as critical stakeholders in decision making.
9. **Strengthen infrastructure for integrated supports.**
 - Investment in community schools coordinators to provide needs assessments and support for pulling resources and partnerships needed to utilize community schools strategy
10. **Leverage support from other funding sources** that provide critical services such as food and nutrition (SNAP, CACFP), broadband expansion (e.g. ConnectED), and other mental and emotional health grants to fully meet students' needs.

Resources

- Afterschool, summer, and expanded learning opportunities
 - [New York State Network for Youth Success](#)
 - [School-Community Partnerships Guidebook](#)
 - [Quality Self-Assessment \(QSA\) Tool](#)
 - [National AfterSchool Association](#)
 - [Afterschool Alliance](#)
 - [Starting an Afterschool Program](#)
- Community schools
 - [New York State Community Schools Technical Assistance Centers](#)
 - [New York State Community Schools Network](#)
 - [National Center for Community Schools](#)
 - [Building Community Schools: A Guide for Action](#)
 - [Coalition for Community Schools](#)

² https://annenberg.brown.edu/sites/default/files/EdResearch_for_Recovery_Design_Principles_1.pdf

- [School-Based Health Centers](#)
 - [How to Start a Community School](#)