

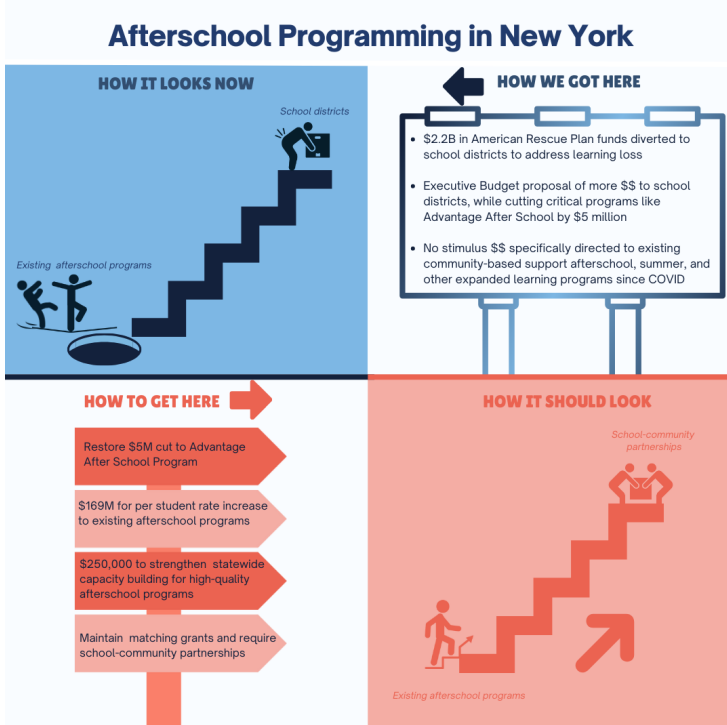


**TESTIMONY TO THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC HEARING ON 2022-2023 EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL ON HUMAN SERVICES
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Our thanks to Senator Krueger, Assemblymember Weinstein, Senator Brisport, Assemblymember Hevesi, Senator Persaud, and Assemblymember Rosenthal, and to the other members of the Finance, Ways and Means, Children and Families, and Social Services Committees for the opportunity to present testimony to you today regarding the Executive Budget Proposal.

Afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs in New York have risen to the moment. In spite of program disruptions caused by COVID-19, the vulnerability of the afterschool infrastructure, and the limited resources to work with afterschool, many afterschool providers – driven by passion and commitment to meet critical needs – continue to adapt high-quality programs to support youth. These programs are helping to expand learning opportunities to support caregivers who need a safe place for their kids while they are working. These programs provide services and support that promote resilience, provide protective factors, and leverage assets that can help overcome the effects of trauma and adversity, which has heightened amid COVID-19. For many New York families, afterschool goes beyond after school.



Yet, these programs, stretched to their limits to meet the needs of students and families during the pandemic, were largely left out of direct federal relief funding. The afterschool field has experienced dire needs especially amid COVID-19: Unprecedented staff shortages fueled by grave undercompensation amid a shifting labor market; low per-student reimbursement rates that are woefully inadequate of true costs of programming; and contract modifications that have de-stabilized afterschool programming have adversely affected the capacity of programs to operate effectively at a time when they are most needed. Crucial investments for afterschool are long overdue.

Impact of Afterschool

Evidence shows that afterschool programs play a critical role in improving student outcomes and that summer programs halt summer learning loss. As recently as 2019, a new Research for Action study looked at a broad range of afterschool programs across age groups and across focus areas such as academics, athletics, and career pathways, and found significant positive impacts on students. These quality afterschool and summer programs support students as they pursue their passions and learn how to take chances and make calculated risks and healthy choices.

For students who are fortunate enough to be enrolled in high-quality afterschool and summer programs, these opportunities contribute to the development of social-emotional skills that employers look for in their future employees. They also provide Protective Factors such as access to, and relationships with, nurturing adults that we know result in healthier children who make better decisions and are able to build skills that last a lifetime.

Parents also value quality afterschool programs. Programs not only help working families build bridges to their children's school day by offering academic and social supports, they also help working families maintain their own economic stability at work while knowing their children are safe and engaged. New York parents and guardians agree that afterschool programs have a positive impact on their families. According to the 2020 America After 3PM report:

- 94% of New York parents/guardians are satisfied with their child's overall afterschool program experience;
- 76% agree that these programs keep kids safe and out of trouble; and
- 82% agree that afterschool programs provide opportunities for kids to learn important life skills.

Support from afterschool programs have been crucial for families returning to work amid the pandemic. Afterschool, summer, and other expanded learning opportunities play a necessary role for New York students and families.

Despite the many benefits of these programs, the demand for afterschool programs remains high. While New York has made important investments in afterschool, summer, and other expanded learning programs, it still falls short of the amount that is needed to ensure that students who would participate in an afterschool program if one were available to them, are able to do so. For every child in an afterschool program in New York, four are waiting to get in. With the onset of COVID-19, this need has most likely increased.

Budget priorities

Afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs address needs that are crucial to the recovery, stability, and support of students and their families. More than ever, we must strengthen, enhance, transform, and leverage afterschool programs to empower youth success in the following ways:

Strengthen afterschool programs

If we fail to provide direct investments and supports to empower the trusted afterschool partners, who have gone above and beyond to keep our young ones hopeful, eager to learn,

and connected, we undermine their essential role towards students' success. We ask the State to:

1. **Restore \$5 million cut to the Advantage After School Program** and baseline funding throughout the award term (2019-2025). Persistent reductions in the Executive Budget undercut the Advantage program. Moreover, a cut to this program in the midst of a crisis and ongoing grant period is detrimental to the afterschool programs, staff, and more than 2,500 students and families who depend on the program to find healthy and safe spaces to foster positive development.
2. **Provide a bridge investment of \$169 million** to align current per student rate of state afterschool programs with a true base cost rate of \$4,300 for one year. [Every dollar invested in a high-quality afterschool program saves about three dollars](#)¹. The highest per-student rate yet for a state afterschool funding stream at \$2,000 still falls short of what the rate should be (\$2,320) if it accounted for minimum wage adjustments while holding everything else constant. It is also woefully inadequate when considering the true costs of delivering high-quality programming, which can be as high as \$7,000 per student. These funds will begin to align the per student rate with the true base cost of care and minimum wage increases for one year by providing an additional:
 - a. \$40.4 million for the Advantage After School Program
 - b. \$87.4 million for the Empire State After-School Program
 - c. \$41.1 million for the Extended School Day/School Violence Prevention Program
3. **Amend budget language for Empire State After-School** to increase the per student rate. Only the Empire State After-School Program sets the per student rate in statute. A change to the rate is only possible following a language amendment.

Enhance afterschool programs

4. **Direct a new line-item funding of \$250,000 to the NYS Network for Youth Success** to strengthen statewide capacity building for afterschool programs. A \$250,000 investment is only about 0.6% of the required minimum CCDF quality setaside (~\$41 million), none of which is dedicated to school-age child care. The Network is the only organization in New York that coordinates statewide expertise, resources, and technical assistance specifically focused on afterschool and school-age child care. With no base funding from the State however, the Network is not adequately positioned to provide the critical technical assistance the State recognizes it provides. Neither is the organization able to sustain the wide scope of quality support afterschool programs need, especially amid COVID-19.
5. **Invest an additional \$3 million to expand the Educational Incentive Program**, which assists child care providers participating in professional development activities. These funds have been depleted by September each year, revealing the incredible demand for professional development support.

¹Afterschool Programs: A Wise Public Investment (2005). Afterschool Alliance. Retrieved from <https://www.afterschoolalliance.org/printPage.cfm?idPage=BC05E8A3-1E0B-E803-CADCD9D1B482AD0B>

Transform afterschool programs

6. **Streamline contract process for a timely execution of contracts and payments to awarded afterschool grantees.** Recent contract amendments undertaken that shift reimbursement models towards attendance-based in the midst of a crisis greatly shortchange these programs and put them in untenable positions. In a recent focus group study by the State, afterschool programs funded by the state reported facing long, redundant, and difficult contract processes which led several programs to delay, suspend, and/or avoid future operations related to the grants. These challenges come at a time when many programs have suffered sunk costs amid COVID-19 closures.

7. **Direct \$500 million through a Child Care Investment Fund** to provide funding to support competitive wages, and workforce and professional development for child care professionals. Many afterschool professionals, who are part of the resilient child care workforce, were underpaid due to low reimbursement and per-student rates pre-COVID. The changing dynamics in the labor market during the pandemic, including competitive wages, increased flexibility, and more benefits provided in other industries has made it even more difficult for programs to hire and retain staff for their programs. Unsurprisingly, concerns about staff shortages and burnout emerged as the top concern for afterschool programs in [national](#)² and state surveys conducted amid the pandemic.

8. **Commit to and fund a smart investment of \$6.9 billion over the next five years to provide access to afterschool for every New York child that needs it.** 1.6 million children— of which over 45% are students in K-5 grade levels — would engage in an afterschool program if one were available to them. Existing afterschool supports, as is, cannot meet this demand. States like [Vermont](#)³ (taskforce created in 2020 to inform universal access to afterschool by 2025) and [California](#)⁴ (provided \$1 billion in 2021 with a phased increase to \$5 billion by 2025) have made strides in their efforts towards universal afterschool, and New York is presented with the opportunity to prioritize such investments as a national leader.

9. **Prioritize [school-age children in the vision of universal child](#)⁵ care in New York.** Universality of high-quality child care in New York can be truly transformational only

² Where Did All the Afterschool Staff Go? (2020). Afterschool Alliance. Retrieved from http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Afterschool-COVID-19-Wave-6-Brief.pdf?utm_source=sendinblue&utm_campaign=Afterschool%20staff%20shortage%20brief%20announcement&utm_medium=email

³ The Vision

The Future of Universal Afterschool and Summer in Vermont (n.d.). Vermont Afterschool. Retrieved from <https://vermontafterschool.org/the-vision/>

⁴ California Roars Back: Governor Newsom Signs \$100 Billion California Comeback Plan to Accelerate State's Recovery and Tackle Persistent Challenges (2021). Office of Governor Gavin Newsom. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2021/07/12/california-roars-back-governor-newsom-signs-100-billion-california-comeback-plan-to-accelerate-states-recovery-and-tackle-persistent-challenges/>

⁵ Prioritizing school-age children in the vision of universal child care in New York (2021). New York State Network for Youth Success. Retrieved from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NsCfloxQm02DZfiPyVIqal9HcyZAT4W8/view?usp=sharing>

when it is built on an aligned, coordinated, and accessible continuum of care system, that includes school-age children. This is because:

- a. The demand for care and support for school-age children has increased.
- b. Support needs for families and providers caring for school-age children are profound.
- c. Developing and implementing “half a system” could have dire consequences for the vulnerable child care infrastructure.
- d. Universal child care is ultimately achieved through a comprehensive, responsive system that provides support for ALL children.

Leverage afterschool programs

- 10. Provide appropriate measures in statute to ensure accountability and transparency in the utilization of ESSER III funds available to leverage afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs.** American Rescue Plan funds to address learning loss, which were directed entirely to school districts, present an enormous opportunity to leverage school-community partnerships to maximize student success and community development. With strong commitments, resources, and coordinated efforts between schools and community partners, these funds can help us reach every child in New York through afterschool, summer, and expanded learning opportunities. To ensure that schools are maximizing supports and leveraging community partnerships, the state should facilitate and make accessible school district data on:
- a. Type of supports and services provided and under what evidence-based intervention these supports occurred
 - b. Community partners school district engaged in providing these supports
 - c. Outputs and/or outcomes of supports and services provided

- 11. Require school districts receiving new RECOVS Learning and Mental Health grants to demonstrate mutual collaboration with at least one community-based afterschool, youth and/or family serving organization, and/or mental health partner to help students recover fully.** In spite of unprecedented investments, school districts alone cannot help students recover. They will need these community-based partners who have the expertise and essential resources to work towards holistic recovery and resilience. School-community partnerships are a valuable strategy that promotes enrichment, strengthens engagement, and leverages experience to help foster student growth, development, and care.

Afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs works in New York to empower youth success. And we are counting on our state legislators and Governor to increase much-needed afterschool investments this year.

Also, in collaboration with the Association of New York State Youth Bureaus, New York State Community Schools Network, Campaign for Summer Jobs, and Winning Beginning NY, the Network supports the following budget asks:

Community Schools: Invest \$100M toward a new Community Schools Categorical Aid; maintain proposed \$250M in Community Schools Set-Aside and minimum allocation of \$100K; and increase funding for the Community Schools Technical Assistance Centers by \$800K.

Youth Development Program (YDP): Invest \$6M to bring funding back to FY2011 level at \$20.6M.

Summer Youth Employment Program: Maintain proposed \$46.1M.

Childcare: We support the requests of the Empire State Campaign for Child Care to take large steps toward achieving universal child care by expanding access to child care subsidies (\$2.8B); raising child care workforce compensation, and increasing provider reimbursement rates (\$500M); and transitioning to a payment rate model that accounts for geography, quality, and assumes all child care staff are paid at parity with elementary school teachers (\$600M).

Thank you for your time.

Appendix 1.

\$250,000 in Quality Support to Mobilize and Coordinate High-Quality School-Age Child Care Programs in New York

The NYS Network for Youth Success (NYSNYS or “the Network”) is the only organization in New York that coordinates statewide expertise, resources, and technical assistance specifically focused on school-age child care (SACC). The organization is also recognized as a critical partner on plan development, stakeholder feedback, dissemination of resources, providing technical assistance, training of staff, and resources for serving homeless children and families in New York’s state Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) plan. Throughout 2020 and 2021, the Network continued providing quality support, without funding, to the field and increased its services to meet the needs of a vulnerable SACC system amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The Network for Youth Success continues to provide quality support and technical assistance to SACC providers, services that are aligned with the requirements of federal funding. **With no base funding from the state however, the Network is not adequately positioned to provide this wide scope of quality support.**

Ask: Direct a new line-item funding of \$250,000 in the FY 2022-2023 State Budget to the NYS Network for Youth Success to sustain the mobilization and coordination of high-quality SACC programs. Without these quality funds, NYSNYS will no longer be able to offer quality support services and technical assistance to the field, which it has provided consistently over its rich 25-year history. New York will truly have no statewide support dedicated to SACC providers at a time when the field is pressed due to the economic hardships brought on by the pandemic. In addition to the supports (below) the Network provides, these funds would allow the Network to:

- Explore and develop blueprints for data collection on school-age child care
- Support efforts to expand QUALITYstarsNY to school-age child care programs
- Enhance capacity to coordinate COVID-19 support for afterschool, summer, and other expanded learning programs

NETWORK SUPPORTS

[COVID-19 supports](#)

[Offering professional development](#)

[Developing quality tools](#)

[Gathering stakeholder feedback](#)

[Providing technical assistance](#)

[Curating vision for the field](#)

[Bringing providers together](#)

COVID-19 supports

Amid COVID-19, the Network for Youth Success has been critical in supporting the quality, capacity, and alignment of the school-age child care field in New York. The Network:

- is redesigning AfterschoolPathfinder.org, a free, statewide job and training posting site for the afterschool field to help address staffing shortages the field is facing
- developed a federal stimulus webpage that provides resources to inform schools/districts and the afterschool partners' decisions in maximizing American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding. The webpage provides tools to search for ARP funds by local school districts, access a curated list of community partners, and a toolkit on school-community partnerships.
- developed a COVID-19 resource page to collate and disseminate information to programs on updates to state funding streams; tools for supporting youth, families, and staff; resources for operating virtually or socially distanced; and reopening guides and guidance.
- kept the field informed by highlighting and sending frequent blasts to our listservs with updated information and guidance.
- developed and conducted webinars on the childcare stabilization grants and COVID-19 vaccine FAQs, as well as trainings on revised Department of Health guidelines for child care programs and summer camps.
- developed new professional development trainings including a training series on Trauma Informed Care, True Colors personality assessment training, virtual Health and Safety training, and a new training on virtual self-assessment to help the field effectively adapt, respond, and support their programs, families, and communities.
- served as the liaison between providers and OCFS to ensure there is constant communication of information in both directions.
- cataloged all of the school district reopening plans (fall 2020) and how they do or do not include afterschool, childcare, and pre-k to serve as a resource to help SACC programs strategize in their partnership efforts with schools to meet students' needs.
- Worked closely with our regional afterschool networks to convene local partners (school districts, funders, city/county leadership, colleges/universities, local providers, etc.) and mobilize localized efforts to support programs amid COVID-19

In addition to quality support NYSNYS is providing amid the pandemic, NYSNYS has been supporting the field by:

Disseminating resources

- The Network sends weekly newsletters to its full listserv of thousands of afterschool providers including new research and resources, highlights from the field, upcoming events, and more.
- More than 2,200 individuals follow the Network on Facebook to take advantage of posted resources and activities.
- As the state representative for the 50 State Afterschool Network, state affiliate for the National AfterSchool Association, state lead for the National Girls Collaborative Project, and backbone for the New York State Community Schools Network, the Network connects the field to national experts, best-practices, and resources.
- Through its 15 affiliated regional afterschool networks, the Network uplifts local models. Regional networks help share best practices and coordinate local professional development resources for programs and providers. They also provide effective means to distribute information and engage programs and parents on state and local policy issues.

Developing quality tools

[The Quality Self-Assessment \(QSA\) Tool](#)

- The Network developed the QSA Tool with experts, researchers, and practitioners to be relevant and reasonable. The free tool allows programs to self-assess across 11 elements of quality, reviewing best-practices from administration and sustainability to programming and family engagement, and create and implement improvement plans supported by aligned resources. The updated 3rd Edition includes new indicators on diversity, equity, and inclusion and with a new Informal STEM Learning element developed in partnership with the PEAR Institute at Harvard University.
- The QSA Tool is available in 10 languages and is recommended for use for all state and federally funding programs in New York.

A sampling of other resources developed by the Network for Youth Success and offered free to the field:

- [Including All Participants: Frequently Asked Questions About Including Participants with Disabilities in Afterschool and Summer Programs](#)
- [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Resources](#)
- Webinar: [Supporting Homeless Students and Families through Afterschool](#)
- [The State of Youth Justice in New York](#)
- [School-Community Partnership Guidebook](#)

Providing technical assistance

- The Network provides assistance to individuals and organizations looking to start new programs, many of whom are unfamiliar with or have questions regarding school-age child care regulations, via phone.
- The Network serves as a liaison between existing programs and OCFS and is often the first group contacted with questions and concerns.
- To improve communication between providers and OCFS, the Network hosts regional meetings between OCFS Managers, the Network's regional afterschool networks, and providers.
- Through its newsletter and listservs, the Network keeps providers up-to-date on OCFS work and school-age child care regulations by sharing Dear Provider letters and statements.
- To address a gap where new Health and Safety Trainings were only offered with a focus on child care but were required for school-age child care providers, the Network became trained in, and now offers, Health and Safety Trainings for school-age child care providers.

Bringing providers together

- The Network's two-day Annual Conference offered each spring has sold out for several years and has now moved to a larger venue due to high demand. During the pandemic, it has taken place virtually.
- The Network offers complimentary tickets for Advantage Managers to its Annual Conference.

- To meet regional needs, the Network also offers regional training days throughout the year.

Offering professional development

- The Network administers the School-Age Care Credential, which serves as an education qualifier for directors under the SACC regulations, and advertises it broadly across the state to help programs improve quality and sustainability by getting their staff credentialed.
- The Network also offers a Distance Learning course online to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to the Credential, no matter where they are located.
- The Network develops a full professional development catalog based on the needs raised by the field:
 - The Site Leader Institute helps prepare new afterschool program grantees and new site directors to operate high-quality programs through in-person and virtual trainings and coaching throughout the year.
 - Coaching Circles are offered in various communities to bring together providers and help them learn to work together to solve the issues they face in their programs, and they are designed to be sustained.
 - Professional development around Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math is offered on demand, including Click2SciencePD, CryptoClub, and Citizen Science.
 - To address needs around Healthy Eating and Physical Activity, the Network sought and acquired funds to offer three free workshop series for providers across the state.

Gathering stakeholder feedback

- For each Request for Proposals released by the state, the Network consults the field and provides advance recommendations before the RFP development, questions and comments once it is released, and feedback after awards have been made.
- As needed, the Network conducts surveys of the field to learn more about current needs and issues, including several surveys to gather feedback around the School-Age Child Care Regulations.
- The Network serves as the state advisors to the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program and provides input to the State Education Department and Technical Assistance Centers based on feedback from grantees and national best-practices.

Curating vision for the field

- The Advisory Council run by the Network brings together the Office of Children and Family Services, the State Education Department, and other state and New York City public agencies to allow for updates and collaboration.
- The Network has led New York State's team for multiple peer learning communities run by the National Center of Afterschool and Summer Enrichment, which have brought together public and private partners to develop plans for advancing New York State's afterschool field around workforce, social-emotional learning, and quality systems.