

Executive Summary

Recommendations of the Afterschool and Out-Of-School Time Coordinating Council:

A Report on the Importance of Afterschool and Summer Learning

There is universal agreement that our Commonwealth has a responsibility to educate and prepare our children for success. This is not the first report to call for greater investment in our next generation so that all of our children have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential; however, in this report, we have gathered and documented current groundbreaking research on afterschool and summer learning that demonstrates the importance of investing in the whole child, in school, and as importantly, when out of school.

Since 2013, The Afterschool and Out-of-School Time Coordinating Council has received input from Massachusetts departments that serve children, youth, and families; diverse community-based organizations; local, state, and national experts; government officials; and afterschool and summer learning educators. The goal of the Council from day one has been to design a system of supports for programs that allow for more children to be served in the afterschool space and to heighten the quality of programming that is available. Achieving this goal will level the playing field for so many of the Commonwealth's children who are currently left behind, not for lack of ability, but for lack of opportunity.



To address the existing issues that programs face in adequately serving afterschool and out of school time programs, the Coordinating Council recommends that the following steps be taken to achieve success for our next generation.



Increasing Investment to Support Access to Quality Programs

Targeted investments in afterschool and out-of-school time programs will yield positive effects that make a lifetime of difference for our children. These strategies are grounded in research that shows that children do better when they attend quality afterschool and summer programs. They do better in school, in relationships with peers and adults, in behavior management, in skill development, in their college and career plans, and in their lives. We recommend that the Commonwealth:

- Address the state's growing waitlist
- Use cannabis revenue to support afterschool and summer programming
- Address programming gaps in rural areas of the state
- Use federal dollars to increase access and quality in programming
- Analyze our transportation system for students and bring greater equity and coordination to it
- Increase the Quality Enhancements in Afterschool and Out-of-School time Grant.



Investing in a Quality Workforce

Just as in the early education field, afterschool and summer programs struggle to provide their staff adequate pay, yet the common denominator for quality programs is the quality of the staff. We recommend that the Commonwealth:

- Increase reimbursement rates for state funded afterschool education so that salaries may be increased
- Invest in scholarship and loan forgiveness programs for staff
- Provide increased statewide professional development for out of school-time staff
- Develop a career track for afterschool and out-of-school time educators
- Provide specific guidance on the Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Standards.



Leverage Local Partnerships Among Cities, Schools and Afterschool

A community-based approach to out-of-school time programming is an effective way to conduct afterschool and summer programming. Our recommendations are aimed at how best to support communities in creating an environment that embraces the positive impact that afterschool and out-of-school time programs can have on children. Some of these strategies include:

- Incentivizing public private partnerships
- Create tax incentives that will inspire business investment in programs
- Develop best practices that model partnerships that succeed in increasing quality and access to afterschool
- Create mechanisms for data sharing among stakeholders that improve children's outcomes.



Strengthen and Align State Oversight and Policy Development for Afterschool and Summer Learning

Coordination among state agency initiatives is sometimes a challenge. Often just better communication and information can solve these issues which are critically important for practical, effective and successful policy development for afterschool opportunities. Accordingly, we recommend that the Commonwealth:

- Create a statewide data and IT system for afterschool and summer learning
- Develop an alignment committee between all child serving state departments
- Implement the recommendations of the alignment committee
- Create an evaluation tool study
- Align professional development standards across departments
- Create a position in the Executive Office of Education to coordinate informal learning in Massachusetts
- Create an afterschool caucus in the Legislature.

For a comprehensive overview of the recommendations set forth here, please read the full report which will be available at <https://afterschoolcouncil.org/research-and-reports>. This report documents in depth the research demonstrating why the above supports are necessary to benefit all of us. Thank you to everyone who contributed their time, thoughts, and suggestions to make this report possible. It is the Council's hope that this report is informative and assists the state in implementing a better system of administering afterschool and summer learning programs to children and youth so that we all share in a brighter future.