

# Afterschool: Improving Lives in Pennsylvania

A report prepared by the Pennsylvania Statewide Afterschool/Youth Development Network (PSAYDN)

To observe a child engaged in learning is to glimpse a future ripe with opportunities. Yet not all learning is contained within the four walls of a traditional classroom. Pennsylvania's high quality out-of-school time (OST) (e.g. afterschool, weekend, summer learning) programs partner with school systems, museums, the arts and community organizations to help children in grades K-12 increase academic achievement, inspire learning and help families – showing a significant return on Pennsylvania's OST investment.

This report, *Afterschool: Improving Lives in Pennsylvania*, reviews national and state research that identifies key components of effective OST programs, highlights specific Pennsylvania examples and makes recommendations to benefit more of Pennsylvania's children.

Research shows that effective OST programs typically 1) have structured and regular activities; 2) provide engaged adult mentors; 3) offer services outside traditional school time during all or most of the school year and, in the summer, for at least five hours a day for six or more weeks; 4) expect regular attendance; and 5) are affiliated with a school or center-based facility.

OST programs in Pennsylvania are operated by an array of institutions, including public, private and charter schools, higher education, municipalities, community-based and religious organizations and school-based childcare facilities. Some Pennsylvania OST programs are recognized as nationally known entities with a local presence, such as Boys & Girls Clubs, 4-H and the YMCA, while others are convened through smaller private and nonprofit agencies.

Pennsylvania has much to gain by providing increased access and affordability to OST programs because they have positive impacts on academics, behavior and public program costs. Stakeholders should avail the expertise of the Pennsylvania Statewide Afterschool/Youth Development Network (PSAYDN), in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and local policymakers, to close the gap between the demand and supply of quality OST programs in Pennsylvania. Adding quality programs is not an easy task and it is not uncommon for a new program to require two or more years to achieve that status. Growing the supply of OST opportunities can occur with targeted investments where programs are most needed and where there are regional and local entities whose staff can guide and coach programs towards better outcomes and continuous improvement.

Thousands of OST programs across the state demonstrate successful outcomes for children and youth. Yet, Pennsylvania is not among the approximately 20 states that have dedicated state funding for these programs. *Afterschool: Improving Lives in Pennsylvania* provides a snapshot of those successes to support the following recommendations:

- **Make investments in OST programs a priority.** Such investments will help OST staff meet the needs of children and families, and continue to provide positive academic and engagement outcomes. Targeted investments that support OST and summer learning programs can expand the capacity to serve more children and families.

- **Adopt quality guidelines that help OST providers communicate their values and result in successful outcomes.** Quality standards can be used by funders and stakeholders as a tool for support. A formal adoption of quality standards for funding opportunities serves as a mechanism to demonstrate what a high quality program looks like. Stakeholders can also utilize quality OST programs as a resource for schools under Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to meet the needs of children and families. Agencies can build this recognition by ensuring opportunities and resources are available to OST providers.
- **Align resources and build partnerships to support high quality OST programming that helps Pennsylvania families and the commonwealth's workforce needs.** Employers recognize the various skills, attitudes and knowledge future employees need. OST programs have a role to play in supporting the development of these skills. A 2016 Workforce Development Survey commissioned by the Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry<sup>1</sup> indicated that 72 percent of Pennsylvania companies had difficulty hiring employees with adequate skills, training and education. The Chamber found that successful companies supported partnerships, programs and workforce development such as internships, apprenticeships, mentorships and training programs. The Chamber's survey also indicated a strong reliance on collaboration and teamwork, verbal and written skills, and project management knowledge. In short, the Chamber's stated needs correspond with the attributes cultivated by OST programs. OST programs have a tangible impact on the workforce by assisting in the preparation of students for future employment.

With their strong emphasis on engaging students, improving academic achievement, keeping youth safe and learning essential work and life skills, Pennsylvania's OST programs are well-positioned to complement, supplement and support K-12 school systems to ensure that every Pennsylvania child is prepared to succeed in today's classroom and tomorrow's workforce.

## Why Afterschool Matters

Over the last 20 years, there has been an increase in the development of OST opportunities available to children and youth through high quality programs, providing millions of children with access to experiences and learning opportunities that lead to a bright future. Still, there are children in many Pennsylvania neighborhoods and schools without these invaluable resources.

At their finest, quality OST programs are vibrant environments that nurture and promote creativity and innovation in the activities and opportunities offered as well as in the personal connections and social environments that lead to positive effects for children and youth.

In the robust, diverse field of OST, achieving consensus on significant outcomes is not a trivial task. OST programs are highly distinct from one another, serving different age groups, relying on different localized resources and pursuing different types of goals.

OST programs are a vital piece of the available hours children and youth are not formally in school – almost 80 percent of their time. The nation's largest investment in such opportunities, currently over one billion invested annually across the country in 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC), has been a bi-partisan focus of support in Congress since the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1994.

Most recently, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA – which reauthorizes ESEA), was passed by Congress and signed by the president, it preserves funding for 21st CCLC and includes an official definition of expanded learning time, which was not present in the previous version of the bill (2001 No Child Left Behind Act).

Because of the continuous research evidenced by OST programs driving successful learning outcomes, expanded learning is referenced in the ESSA's school improvement fund for states and named as one of the approaches states can take to help their lowest-performing schools improve. OST programs actively bring new resources to the community, teach students in an engaging fashion and make strides in academic achievements, especially in low-performing schools.

## Afterschool in Pennsylvania

OST programs for K-12 youth provide important resources and educational opportunities across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Like their counterparts in other states, Pennsylvania's OST programs have a wide range of programming and serve a diverse group of students. Regardless of their goals and enrollment, research documented on the highlighted OST programs in this report demonstrate that they offer significant benefits to K-12 youth.

OST programs have a variety of missions and goals. Some aspire to raise young people's reading or math test scores while others focus on improving behavior, social and emotional growth, school attendance or graduation rates. Nearly all offer daily homework assistance or provide other academic supports that align, but not replicate, with the school day. In fact, many provide structured programming and enrichment activities that schools do not offer, purposively delivered in a pedagogical fashion different from what the typical school model might dictate. Most programs incorporate a theme such as STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) and oftentimes infuse project-based learning to improve student learning and retention.<sup>2,3</sup>

In Pennsylvania, over 321,296 students (17 percent) participate in an afterschool program. Among them, 48,520 students (7 percent) participate in a 21st CCLC federal grant program, which helps support the creation of expanded learning opportunities to serve children living in high poverty areas and attending low-performing schools.<sup>2</sup>

In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's 2016 Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LBFC) survey, conducted as a landscape overview of OST programs, local education agencies (LEAs) across the state reported their reliance on OST programming for both afterschool care and academic support. According to the results, more than one-third of the responding 93 school districts reported that more OST programs are needed – middle school programs being needed most.

The LBFC report also found that urban areas are particularly stressed, as 58 percent of afterschool providers in urban areas reported their programs were at full capacity versus 45 percent in suburban areas and 43 percent in rural areas. Staffing limitations, due to limited funding and/or the inability to attract and retain staff, was the most common reason why OST programs cannot accept more students.

The absence of summer learning programs can cause lower-income children and youth to fall more than two and a half years behind their more affluent peers by the end of fifth grade, directly contributing to higher dropout rates and two-thirds of the achievement gap.<sup>4</sup> Overall, 34 percent of Pennsylvania's afterschool programs said they would need to at least double their capacity to serve all children in their community who need OST programs.<sup>5</sup>

### State Support of OST Programs

Although OST programs are widespread across Pennsylvania, additional support is necessary. The programs face the complex and demanding task of coordinating meaningful curricula and programs for youth in order to make substantial contributions to a child's educational progress.



The next section of this document provides a spotlight on Pennsylvania OST programs and/or initiatives that have made significant impact in the outcome areas of:

- Academic achievement
- Inspiring learning
- Return on investment
- Helping families

## Outcome: Advances Academic Achievements

There is a growing body of academic research revealing that OST programs have positive impacts on students' academic growth. These programs are delivered to ensure certain critical elements are utilized to engage students and increase attendance, thus attaining an adequate "dosage" level for academic gains.<sup>9,10</sup> Researchers differ only slightly in what they believe the critical elements are, yet there is growing consensus those include access to the program; alignment of program content with student academic and behavioral goals; trained and experienced staff; meaningful youth relationships with adults; and strong partnerships among the program and other places (school, home, etc.) where students are learning.<sup>11-13</sup>

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### SPOTLIGHT

## Allegheny Partners for Out-of-School Time (APOST) Quality Campaign Members

Higher Achievement and Propel Schools, Pittsburgh, Pa., are two of 46 quality campaign members of APOST, a partnership of funders, intermediaries and providers, dedicated to building a quality OST system that serves nearly 23,000 children and youth in western Pennsylvania. APOST plays a critical role in the Pittsburgh region that supports youth-serving organizations in improving their program quality through intentional program design and continuing education for adults who work with youth. Members go through a rigorous process to ensure commitment to quality standards to join the network as Quality Campaign Members.

### Higher Achievement

Higher Achievement's rigorous afterschool and summer academic program helps close the achievement gap for middle school youth (5-8 grades) in underserved and academically under-performing communities. The program's proven model provides a rigorous year-round learning environment, caring adult role models and a culture of high expectations, resulting in college-bound scholars with the character, confidence and skills needed to succeed. On average, 93 percent of scholars who complete Higher Achievement advance to college.

A 2014 interview between The Heinz Endowments and Higher Achievement Executive Director Wendy Etheridge Smith, revealed how the program has been successful and has shown academic improvement among students participating in the afterschool and summer programs. Internal data showed 74 percent of students increasing and/or maintaining A/B grades in math and 73 percent were doing the same in reading. Statistical resources included a database of student, aggregate county data and assessment information. Using that data, Higher Achievement compared their scholars to other students from their schools and found that Higher Achievement scholars who completed a year with the program had more increases in GPA and attendance, and at the same time, had reductions in absences.<sup>3</sup>

### Propel Schools

Propel Schools is one of the largest, fastest-expanding set of charter schools in the state, with the highest levels of student achievement among Pennsylvania public school districts serving high-poverty areas. Propel Schools has afterschool programs at all of its 11 schools; three are 21st CCLC sites. Attendance throughout the year at the afterschool programs runs at approximately 85 percent of the more than 700 students enrolled. The demand for the OST program far exceeds the availability. Several sites have waiting lists.

School officials know that the afterschool program has contributed to Propel Schools' significant positive impact on the population it serves. Compared to the school districts where they live, Propel Schools students are more likely to be at grade level in science (by 38 percent), reading and writing (by 29 percent), and math (by 25 percent).

Overall, students who attended the afterschool program for at least 30 days at Homestead Middle School and Braddock Hills High School throughout the school year experienced fewer instances of both suspension and expulsion compared to peers that did not attend the afterschool program. In addition, participants at Braddock Hills High School had fewer unexcused absences than their peers.<sup>14</sup>

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## Summer Learning

A growing body of research also supports the notion that high quality summer learning programs help students succeed. The National Summer Learning Project, funded by The Wallace Foundation since 2011, seeks to find out whether and how voluntary summer programs can help low-income students succeed in school. Pittsburgh is recognized as one of the five participating school districts in the project. A September 2016 report *Learning from Summer: Effects of Voluntary Summer Learning Programs on Low-Income Urban Youth*, found that elementary school students with high levels of attendance in voluntary summer learning programs – defined as at least 20 days of a five- to six-week program – experienced benefits in both math and reading.

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## SPOTLIGHT

### 21st Century Community Learning Centers

In 2014, Research for Action (RFA) conducted an unprecedented effort to evaluate 50 21st CCLC sites with 11 different nonprofit providers in Philadelphia's public school sites. RFA conducted a mixed-methods study that used qualitative and quantitative data; the evaluation confirmed that positive student outcomes increased when participation in OST programs was higher. Among elementary and middle school students for instance, there were fewer absences and suspensions, and better reading outcomes. High school students also had fewer absences and suspensions, as well as greater earning potential in a future career. RFA has conducted subsequent studies and community workshops to share its findings and assist providers in improving their student outcomes.<sup>15,16</sup>

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Academic gains were documented in work supported by the William Penn and The Wallace Foundations, in collaboration between the School District of Philadelphia and the city's OST System-Building Project. The District's Office of Evaluation and Research matched nearly 32,000 OST-participating youth with student records after examining over 140,000 duplicated youth data files from the previous three and a half years and compared their OST program participation to academic and behavioral outcomes at school. The intent was to determine if there were positive relationships between these outcomes and the frequency of OST participation and, if so, to benchmark findings.

In their *Out-of-School Time Participation and Student Outcomes: Evaluation Brief* of 2013, the authors concluded that a "consistent positive relationship between desirable academic and behavioral outcomes and attendance in OST programs was found. The greater the number of OST days attended predicted better outcomes for students."<sup>17</sup>

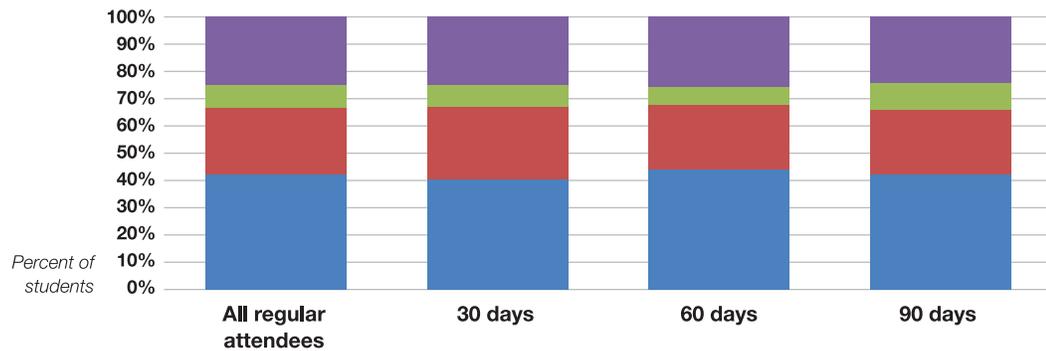
## Outcome: Inspires Learning

A meta-analysis of 68 afterschool studies found that students in high quality afterschool programs attended school more often and showed improvements in their behavior compared to students not enrolled.<sup>18,19</sup> Another study spanning 35 quality afterschool programs found that students regularly participating in programs saw improvements in their work habits, demonstrated higher levels of persistence and saw reductions in reports of misconduct.<sup>18</sup>

Under contract with PDE, the Allegheny Intermediate Unit provided an evaluation of 21st CCLC programs according to performance measures set by the federal government. Engagement data from Pennsylvania's 21st CCLC programs effort includes a summary of how motivated students are to learn. Teachers assessed their students and indicated that the majority of students needing improvement in motivation did improve (Figure 2). This statewide evaluation of Pennsylvania's 21st CCLC programs found that, based on teacher surveys, students regularly participating in the programs had more school engagement, better academic outcomes and fewer behavioral problems.<sup>20</sup>

Figure 2: Percentage of Teachers Rating Whether Students Arrived at School Ready to Learn

### Coming to School Motivated to Learn Results from Teacher Survey by Program Attendance



<span style="color: purple;">■</span> <b>Did not need to improve</b>	3,759	1,386	967	1,406
<span style="color: green;">■</span> <b>Declined</b>	1,237	429	249	559
<span style="color: red;">■</span> <b>No change</b>	3,685	1,428	895	1,362
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> <b>Improved</b>	6,350	2,260	1,655	2,435

Source: Allegheny Intermediate Unit 2015

## SPOTLIGHT

### SHINE After-School Program, Carbon and Schuylkill Counties, Pa.

The SHINE After-School Program (SHINE) decided on a simple goal: improve the school-day attendance of students who show up for the program. The results: a school attendance rate significantly higher than similar programs nationally, improved communications with parents and a remarkable collaboration with school teachers that could prove a model for OST programs.<sup>21</sup>

SHINE is part of a continuum that begins at birth with home visits for new families, continues with outreach to struggling kindergarteners and stretches through high school to help students with the transition into college. The program also offers professional development for afterschool providers and local school teachers, emphasizing the importance of school attendance and reducing the behavior of chronic absence – missing more than 18 days of school.<sup>21</sup>

When students don't come to school, they can't come to SHINE. For students who improve their school day attendance, the program offers rewards to the students as well as to their parents. The program relies on regular data tracking and formative evaluation.<sup>21</sup>

From 2008 to 2015, more than 1,600 first through fifth grade students participated in the SHINE After-School Program. During this period:

- 79% improved in academic performance
- 62% improved in classroom behavior
- 97% were promoted to the next grade
- 91% had exceptionally good or satisfactory school attendance
- 93% had satisfactory or above grades in science (R. Miller, personal communication, September 2016)

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## Outcome: Investments in OST Yield Results

OST programs are often asked to describe their value in terms of dollars and cents. When cost-benefit studies of high quality OST programs are conducted, positive returns on investment are evident.

Some examples from these studies are:

- For every dollar spent on quality expanded learning opportunities, Vermont finds a \$2.18 return in long-term savings and benefits.<sup>22</sup>
- Every dollar invested in OST programs saves taxpayers approximately \$3, not including the savings from reduced crime.<sup>23</sup>
- A cost-benefit analysis of California's The After School and Education Act of 2002 calculated that each OST dollar invested in an at-risk child brings a return of \$8.92 to \$12.90. These benefits are accrued from reduced child care costs, improved school performance, as well as reduced crime and welfare expenditures.<sup>23</sup>

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### SPOTLIGHT

#### PhillyBOOST, Philadelphia, Pa.

PhillyBOOST is a system of more than 70 city- and community-based OST programs funded and managed by the Department of Human Services, Philadelphia Parks and Recreation, the Free Library of Philadelphia, and several Police Athletic Centers and 21st CCLC programs. In total, there are more than 400 distinct physical locations. PhillyBOOST OST programs are marked by their commitment to continuous program quality improvement with an emphasis on data. Over a span of four years, PhillyBOOST has analyzed Part 1 crime rates (homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, theft) during the hours of 3:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., during the same time OST programs occur. Typical OST hours are a peak time for crime to occur making it both a worthwhile investment to keep children and youth off the streets not only to prevent juvenile crimes, but also as a means to protect them from being a victim of crime.<sup>24</sup>



According to the Vera Institute of Justice, Pennsylvania is ranked within the top ten states with the highest annual costs per incarcerated inmates at \$42,339 per individual.<sup>25</sup> On average, it costs \$1,500-\$2,000 for a student to attend a quality afterschool program per year.<sup>26</sup> In addition, there were about 15,400 substantiated delinquency cases in Pennsylvania in 2014.<sup>27</sup> The monetary cost of responding to these cases averages \$148,000 per year.<sup>28</sup>

The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency has stated that an investment of \$2.7 million for delinquency prevention programs for approximately 5,300 juveniles results in \$11.1 million in benefits with a reduction in delinquency, drug use and antisocial behavior. For each dollar spent on prevention, there is an approximate savings of \$4 in future costs.

While a formal return on investment (ROI) analysis has not been completed for this report, it is clear that preventing only a handful of youth from delinquent behavior by engaging them in an OST program has a very large cost advantage in helping to reduce crime and delinquency.

## Outcome: Helps Families

OST programs help working families. In 62.9 percent of all married couple families with children ages 6-17, both parents work outside of the home.<sup>29</sup> Two out of five low-income working parents have significant trouble finding care beyond school hours for their school-age children. In Pennsylvania, 1.4 million school-age children and youth have working parents.<sup>30</sup> This means that 346,458 students (18 percent) are in need of supervised and structured programs keeping them from being at risk for negative outcomes such as crime, teen pregnancy and drug and alcohol abuse. According to the Afterschool Alliance, 811,954 students in Pennsylvania would participate in an afterschool program if one were available to them (50 percent).<sup>31</sup>

In the Afterschool Alliance's 2014 *Pennsylvania After 3PM* Report, 85 percent of Pennsylvania parents indicated support for public funding of afterschool programs, while just 19 percent reported receiving government assistance with the cost of their child's program. From the report, on average, Pennsylvania families spend \$111 per week on their child's OST program, over 14 percent of the average Pennsylvania median annual household income.

Research has shown that United States' youth will need a wide range of skills in order to compete in the global workforce, but that the majority of these students do not have the needed skills by the time they graduate to be successful. OST and businesses have the opportunity to help families by working together to ensure that young people have the needed academic achievement, workplace skills and real life work experiences that will lead to career success.



Many OST programs provide older youth opportunities to stay safe during these vulnerable hours by mentoring other students. For example, the Salvation Army Ark of Learning Afterschool Program has two programs in the DuBois Area School District. Their mentorship program allows high school students in grades 10-12 to match and mentor with an elementary student. This year 20 mentors will be matched, receiving community hours for their volunteer time along with gaining irreplaceable knowledge for college and career readiness.

## Conclusion

Quality OST programs bring a wide range of benefits to youth, families and communities. OST programs can boost academic performance, inspire students to engage in positive school behaviors, and provide a safe, structured environment for the children and youth of working parents. In Pennsylvania, the OST setting is an opportune place to close the opportunity gap that many children and youth from under-served and under-represented communities face. OST and summer programs also present a means to reach populations that need vital STEM learning, career and college readiness and social and emotional competencies through experiences that complement the traditional school day.

Despite the benefits OST provides to Pennsylvania's children and youth, there are still challenges to overcome. Pennsylvania currently does not have a state dedicated funding stream for OST and the federal 21st CCLC funding has been stagnant for years. The 2016 LBFC report also acknowledges the need to foster partnerships between OST providers and schools, businesses and other untapped community groups. Collaboration with schools is particularly important with the enactment of ESSA. Bridging state and local agencies that oversee segments of OST activity can result in an improved alignment of current resources to further support the effort.

The outcomes highlighted in this report provides parents, community leaders, policymakers and OST leaders and staff the means to work together to provide strategies for the following recommendations:

- Make investments in OST programs a priority
- Adopt quality guidelines for funding incentives
- Align resources and build partnerships to support high quality OST programming that helps Pennsylvania families and the commonwealth's workforce needs

Together, we can ensure that Pennsylvania's children, youth and families have access to affordable, high quality OST programs across the state.

## Acknowledgements

The Pennsylvania Afterschool Youth Development Network (PSAYDN) promotes sustainable, high quality out-of-school time youth development programs through advocacy and capacity building to enhance the welfare of Pennsylvania's children, youth and families. Founded in 2004, PSAYDN is one of 50 Statewide Afterschool Networks that is supported by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Pennsylvania Department of Education and other public and private funders, including The Grable Foundation and Heinz Endowments.

PSAYDN is managed by the Center for Schools and Communities, a division of the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit. Since 1988, the Center has been developing programs and services to enhance outcomes for children and families through training, technical assistance, program evaluation, research and resource development.

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**Additional reference materials can be found at [www.PSAYDN.org](http://www.PSAYDN.org).**

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