



After School for All: A Call to Action from the Business Community

The Missing Piece in our Education System: Why America Needs High-Quality After School Programs

Over the past decade, the business community has been a leader in supporting quality after school programs for young people through the creation of innovative public-private initiatives as well as through private philanthropic efforts. We have made this commitment based on our understanding that quality after school programs are crucial to the business community because they help develop the future workforce and because they support the needs of the current workforce. Based on our experience, Corporate Voices for Working Families calls on local, state and federal government entities to work together with the private and non-profit sectors to build a quality after school system so that all young people have access to quality programs in their communities.

Young people spend just 20 percent of their waking hours in school. How they spend the remaining 80 percent of those waking hours can have a significant impact on their overall development. Corporate Voices recognizes that parents are their children's first teachers, and that after school programs are one important way to involve parents in their children's formal learning. We also believe that by providing a range of engaged learning opportunities, high quality after school programs can play a critical role in improving young people's chances of success both in school and in life.

Quality after school programs provide a unique venue in which young people can develop the range of skills they need to enter the 21st Century workplace. Many after school programs provide support for the core academic subjects – reading, writing, and math – and this part of their programming is strongest when it reinforces educational standards. Perhaps even more significant, after school programs create opportunities for young people to develop other essential skills – creative thinking, problem solving, the ability to work on diverse teams, communication, self-direction, and the use of technology – the very skills employers know contribute most to success in the workplace of the future.¹

¹ There is a growing consensus that mastering the basics, reading, writing and math, is no longer enough to ensure that young people will be able to thrive in workplaces and communities of the 21st Century. In their book, *Teaching the New Basic Skills*, Richard Murnane and Frank Levy identify the new basic skills to include problem-solving, working on diverse teams, communication, and using technology for basic tasks such as word processing. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills has identified nine learning skills, in addition to the core basics, that young people should have. These 21st Century skills include: Information and Media Literacy, Communication Critical Thinking and System Thinking, Problem Identification,

After school programs cultivate skills by providing hands-on, experiential learning opportunities, apprenticeships, mentoring, as well as opportunities for exploring new ideas and taking risks. In addition to developing core and new basic skills, after school programs give young people the opportunity to explore and deepen individual interests in the arts, music, drama, or foreign language; develop leadership skills and a sense of citizenship as they become involved in a community service project; or improve their health and fitness by participating in sports and other physical activities. Finally, the informal nature of most after school programs give young people a chance to develop positive relationships with peers and adults, as well as stronger connections between their school, family and community. All of these opportunities combine to help a young person achieve the wide range of skills and well-roundedness they will need to succeed in the workplace and in society.

After school programs also play a crucial role in supporting needs of the current workforce by helping to provide support to working families in the hours before and after school, during school vacations and in the summer. Today, the gap between a child's school week and the parent's work week may be as many as 25 hours, which presents working parents with the challenge of finding someone to care for their children while they are at work. Nationwide, between two and six million children under the age of thirteen regularly care for themselves, and 44% of families do not have any regular after school care for their children. Results from a 2003 poll conducted by Life Event Management® services provider, LifeCare®, Inc., mirror these findings. Forty-seven percent of employees responding to LifeCare's national online poll said they have no before- and after-school plan in place for their children, while 5% said they allow their children to stay home alone.

The time when parents are at work but children are out of school can be particularly stressful ones for working parents because they worry, with reason, about their children's safety. Juvenile crime triples in the after school hours, and unsupervised young people are more likely to be involved in an auto accident, or to experiment with drugs, sex and other unsafe activities. Data from LifeCare also revealed that parents are concerned most about the affects of peer pressure on their children and, secondly, about their children's safety.

While working parents feel the primary strain and worry about unsupervised children, employers are also affected by increased parental stress. A recent study documents the connection between high employee stress due to concerns about their children after school and decreased productivity and increased rates of absenteeism. It estimates the cost to business to be anywhere from \$496.00 to \$1,984.00 per employee, per year, depending on the employee's annual salary. The study confirms what the business community has known for some time: when employees have access to high quality after school programs for their children, employees are better able to concentrate on their

work, increasing productivity and decreasing absenteeism and, ultimately, profitability for the employer.

After school programs impact our national economy in numerous ways. When young people have access to quality programs, they have increased opportunities to succeed academically, and are better prepared to enter post-secondary school and the marketplace, where they will contribute to the growth of our economy. In addition, young people are less likely to get involved in crime and other risky behavior. Leaders from law enforcement argue that investments in after school programs, particularly for high risk youth, pay for themselves in terms of tax dollars saved over time. Finally, the benefit to business through increased productivity and decreased absenteeism will help strengthen the nation's economy. In light of the multiple economic benefits of providing young people with quality after school programs, it is clear that creating high quality after school systems that support a variety of programs is simply a good investment in our economic future.

Special attention should be paid to making programs accessible to low income parents and families, who may otherwise lack the resources to provide such opportunities to their children. While the cost of programs may vary, estimates range from \$1000.00 to more than \$4000.00 per child for a quality school-year program. Even parent responsibility for a modest portion of this cost can be prohibitive for many families. In fact, child care expenses, including after school programs, consume an average of 9% of the monthly income of nearly half of all working families with a child under age 13. Families living below the federal poverty level spend an average of 23 percent of their monthly income on child care.

We urge government agencies at all levels, along with the private and non-profit sectors, to work together to build high quality after school systems in this country. In order to develop a coherent system of integrated programs, all stakeholders will have to work together to invest in the development of infrastructure, support professional development of the field, and work with the field to develop outcomes and accountability measures that reflect the wide range of formal and informal learning opportunities available in quality after school programs. After school programs have a history of being local, community-based efforts in a variety of settings that reflect the needs and interests of their community. Efforts to develop coordinated after school systems should respect this value of having individual programs housed in and influenced by local needs.

Statement of Principles

Corporate Voices for Working Families (CVWF) believes federal, state and local efforts to develop after school systems must be based on a set of guiding Principles that define the components of a successful system and high-quality programs. These Principles draw on current after school research, lessons from youth development, early childhood and K-12 education efforts, and applicable lessons from the nation's experience in building a voluntary system of higher education.

The seven principles below are interconnected; they are not listed in priority order. CVWF and others will use these Principles as a framework to assess existing after school programs, consider philanthropic priorities, review policy proposals on 21st Century Community Learning Centers, and other programs, and formulate policy positions.

1. LEARNING . *A successful after school system* views learning as the central mission. It should:

- Provide positive learning experiences that foster the interconnections among young people’s social, emotional, cognitive and physical development and nurture their engagement in learning;
- Work with families, schools and other community organizations to help young people become self-directed, motivated, lifelong learners with the full range of skills they will need to thrive in the 21st Century;
- Include an academic learning component that is linked to and complements the local school curriculum, and provide time for mentoring, tutoring and homework so that students receive the maximum benefits from academic supports in after school programs;
- Offer a range of other authentic, hands-on learning opportunities that help students develop skills such as working with diverse teams, communication, creative thinking, self-direction and problem solving, which are critical to young people’s success in the workplace;
- Provide choices for creative learning opportunities such as arts, drama, music, foreign languages, sports and community service projects, which help prepare young people to be well-rounded and productive members of society; and
- Hold the same high expectations for success for all young people while also respecting and supporting the diversity of young people’s ideas, families, cultures, races, socio-economic backgrounds, as well as the different ways that young people learn.

2. PARENTS. *A successful after school system* provides links between parents, schools and programs, and provides high-quality program options to parents who enroll their children in programs. It should:

- Provide comprehensive, accessible information so that parents can make informed choices about the range of options available for their children;

- Provide access to high-quality after school programs for families seeking out-of-school time opportunities for their children, regardless of their socio-economic status;
- Offer a variety of ways to meet the diverse needs of families during the time they are working, as well as the need for a range of enriching learning experiences for their children; and
- Recognize the importance and promote practical and effective strategies for parental involvement in support of their children’s learning at home and in after school programs.

3. PROVIDERS. *A successful after school system* recruits, trains and compensates a professional staff that has the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to support young people. It should:

- Reflect a research-based staffing model, including staff qualifications and staff ratios;
- Create ongoing training and professional development opportunities for providers;
- Create a set of compensation benchmarks that will reduce turnover and encourage qualified providers to build a career in the after school field;
- Include providers that reflect the diversity of the community in which the program operates; and
- Involve participants in the design, development and delivery of programs.

4. INFRASTRUCTURE. *A successful after school system* depends upon the creation and support of infrastructure built on public/private collaborations at the local, state and national level. It should:

- Harness sustainable resources to support and facilitate the coordination of programs throughout a city or state;
- Identify, manage and coordinate funding streams from federal, state and local governments as well as private entities;
- Collect and share information on best practices, and offer training and technical assistance to program providers; and
- Provide leadership, communication and advocacy on behalf of the sector.

5. **OUTCOMES.** *A successful after school system* articulates outcomes for children’s learning and program quality that are appropriate to the after school setting. It should:

- Adopt research-based outcomes that support academic success such as increased motivation, attendance and engagement in learning;
- Include outcomes that measure multiple components of programs such as cultivation of new basic skills including working on diverse teams, problem solving and communication, self-direction, as well as exposure to opportunities in the arts, athletics and community service;
- Assess broader youth development outcomes such as self-esteem, interpersonal skills, decision making, leadership and career development;
- Include outcomes that measure the impact on the community such as increased collaboration between programs and other community partners.
- Reflect the consensus of after school professionals around a set of outcomes that are appropriate for comprehensive after school programs.

6. **ACCOUNTABILITY.** *A successful after school system* will embrace accountability for measurable results. It should:

- Collect, analyze and track the data needed to identify best practices, assess system performance, and report these results to stakeholders;
- Track performance and use ongoing research and evaluation to implement continuous improvement processes that put the lessons learned into practice; and
- Support rigorous, longitudinal research that will build a research base to support the long term growth and effectiveness of the after school sector.

7. **PARTNERSHIPS.** *A successful after school* system will build crosscutting partnerships to govern, finance, sustain, and improve the system. It should:

- Create effective and efficient governance mechanisms that support community planning, program development and oversight;

- Involve key stakeholders at the federal, state, and local levels, and encourage public/private partnerships to improve effectiveness, efficiency, and accessibility;
- Ensure a range of options that support parental choice for all families regardless of socio-economic background;
- Include participation among all sectors of the after school field within the state, including public and private programs that take place in schools, and those that are community based; and
- Incent collaborative models that promote adequate, efficient, and shared financing mechanisms that minimize duplication of effort and identify priorities for public investments in times of budgetary constraints as well as a blueprint for future expansion.

From Principles to Policy

Since the mid 1990s, there has been unprecedented growth in funding for after school programs. During this time, leaders at the city and state levels have committed greater attention and resources to support quality after school programs in their communities. At the same time, significant investment has come through two major federal programs, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, and the Child Care Development Block Grant. Private corporate and other philanthropic investment has also grown through a series of innovative public/private collaboratives during this time period. However, increased support for quality programs has not translated into the creation of after school systems in most communities.

In addition, even with a significant increase in resources directed to programs, demand still far exceeds supply. A recent household survey revealed that 6.5 million K-12 youth participated in after school programs in the 2002-2003 school year. During the same period, 14.3 million youth were in self-care, spending an average of 7 hours per week unsupervised in the hours after school. And parents of more than 15 million youth say their children would participate in an after school program if one were available in their community.

Today, the field is at a crossroads. After school holds tremendous promise as the missing piece in our education system. Quality after school programs provide time for students to take school-based learning to a deeper and more individualized level as well as filling many existing gaps in the typical school curriculum in the arts, sports, foreign language and service learning. Yet, the small, informal and local nature of most after school programs – a necessary characteristic of many successful programs – creates fragmentation, which makes it difficult to build quality after school systems in this country.

The Principles outlined in this statement govern our recommendations for policy initiatives that will contribute to the creation of quality after school systems as a key

component of a world-class system of quality education. First, we believe increased investment in after school is needed to enhance the development of young people, and thus the long term growth of our economy. We urge government leaders at the local, state and federal level to commit additional resources, and reprioritize existing budget allocations, to support the creation of sustainable, quality after school systems.

We believe that the creation of quality after school systems will depend upon multiple funding streams, and we recognize the need for ongoing private investment by the corporate and philanthropic sectors as key partners with public investment. We recommend the creation of policies in both the public and private sectors that support increased coordination of public and private resources. Such pooling and coordination should improve efficiency and support the development of cost effective strategies. Models include a requirement for private matching funds as well as the creation of public/private collaborations.²

We urge decision makers at all levels to invest in the creation of infrastructure. Based on the lessons learned from the early education and K-12 fields, it is clear that infrastructure will be needed to support after school systems in multiple ways. In higher education, the federal government's first priority is to help low-income students gain access to postsecondary studies. The federal government also helped states build a voluntary higher education system that is the envy of the rest of the world. The federal government could take a similar role in the after school arena, supporting low-income children's participation in high-quality programs while also helping states to build the infrastructure for high-quality programs—including building staff capacity.

We believe the primary mission of quality after school programs should be to provide a wide range of learning opportunities for children and young people. One important way to deepen learning opportunities is to increase the links and bridging between schools and after school programs. We urge policy makers to promote linking and bridging through policies that encourage cooperation, joint use of space, overlap in staff and other similar innovations.

Finally, we believe that in the coming years, we need to re-imagine our education system so that it supports the learning needs of 21st Century students – imagine schools that teach the basics, and that deepen the learning by incorporating the engaging, hands-on, creative, authentic learning experiences we currently see in high quality after school programs; schools that work with a community based organizations so that young people have a range of learning experiences in the arts, music, service and sports. We also need to re-imagine our education system so that it supports the needs 21st Century working families – imagine schools in which learning happens at times that more closely parallel the work day, and a more coordinated year-round system that promotes lifelong learning and avoids the summer learning loss many children currently experience. We call on stakeholders from across the fields of business, education (early learning, K-12, after

² An excellent example of long-term public/private collaboration can be found in the Boston After School for All Partnership. The collaborating partners include 15 leading philanthropic, education, business and government entities. Together, they have committed \$26.3 million in new funding over a five year period.

school and higher education), youth development, and civic engagement to join together with policy makers in a dialogue about how to create an education system that supports and cultivates the changing needs and demands of children, families, and the economy in the 21st Century.

We are well aware that economic conditions, budgets, and political considerations can hinder or hasten domestic policy initiatives. But even in uncertain times, we can begin to plan for the future. We urge decision makers in the public and private sectors—the U.S. Congress, the Administration, local and state governments, school boards, the business community, and other leaders—to make the creation of quality after school systems a high priority by supporting and endorsing these Principles and launching a multi-sector planning process to identify incremental and additional revenue streams required for implementation. CVWF is committed to working with all stakeholders to build a quality after school system for today’s and tomorrow’s children and young people.

About Corporate Voices for Working Families

Corporate Voices for Working Families is a non-partisan non-profit corporate membership organization created to bring the private sector voice into the public dialogue on issues affecting working families. Collectively our 46 partner companies employ more than 3.5 million individuals throughout all fifty states, with annual net revenues of \$800 billion. Over 70% of our partner companies are listed in the Fortune 500, and all share leadership positions in developing family support policies for their own workforces. This experience is the primary asset Corporate Voices brings to the ongoing dialogue with policy makers and other stakeholders.

Appendix: Supporting Research

High quality after school programs can help children be more successful in school.

- A comprehensive review of the research literature on after school programs revealed that students who participate in these programs experience greater engagement in learning as well as higher academic performance. Students have shown improvements in standardized test performance and homework completion and quality. Participation in after school programs has also been linked to reductions in grade retention. (Miller, 2003).
- Quality after school programs can have a positive effect on the achievement of low-achievement or at-risk students in reading and mathematics. (Lauer, 2003).
- High school freshmen randomly selected to participate in The Quantum Opportunities after school and graduation incentives program were twice as likely as their peers to continue their education beyond high school and almost three times as likely to have received an honor or award as those not selected. (Fight Crime, 2000).

- After school programs can promote parental engagement, a key to academic success, by providing a bridge between children, families and schools that overcome barriers of time as well as cultural divides that may inhibit parental involvement in the schools. (Noam, 2002).

High quality after school programs are linked with a range of positive youth development outcomes.

- Evaluations of high quality after school programs indicate young people experience a wide range of positive youth development outcomes as a result of their participation in the programs; improvements have been identified in many areas including: community involvement, confidence/self-esteem, conflict resolution, decision making, desire to help others, goal setting relationships with adults and peers, leadership skills, respect for diversity and many others. (Harvard Family Research Project, 2003).
- Quality after school programs help children and young people learn the skills they need to succeed academically, and they also teach concern and respect for others, honesty and the importance of working hard and being responsible. (Fight Crime, 2000).
- Students who participated in the Extended-Services Schools school-based after school programs seemed to experience positive change in four key areas: staying out of trouble; improving their school attitudes and behavior; strengthening their social networks; and learning new skills, seeing new possibilities and improving their self-confidence. (Public/Private Ventures, June 2002).

After school programs are proven to cut crime and reduce other risky behavior.

- Studies demonstrate that quality after school programs can:
 - Reduce juvenile crime and violence.
 - Reduce drug use and addiction.
 - Cut other risky behavior like smoking and alcohol abuse.
 - Reduce teen sex and teen pregnancy.
 (Fight Crime, 2000).
- A review of ten studies indicates that quality programs can have a positive affect on a variety of outcomes including drug and alcohol use and violence. (Hollister, 2003).

After school programs are cost-effective.

- A recent report by the Rose Institute determines that after school programs in California are a good investment. The study indicates that the return to taxpayers ranges from \$2.29 to \$4.03 for every dollar spent on after school programs. (Brown, et al., 2002).

Working parents experience an increase in stress when their children are out of school, and this stress can affect their productivity, performance and absenteeism.

- Child care related absences cost U.S. companies an estimated \$3 billion annually. (ABC, 2002).

- Polling shows that 87 percent of working mothers say the hours after school are when they are most concerned about their children’s safety. (Afterschool Alliance Issue Brief 16, citing Fight Crime, Poll Working Mothers, 2003).
- Parents with high Parental After School Stress (PASS) are more likely to report high levels of job disruption, missed days of work, increased errors and decreased productivity. (Barnett, 2004).

The availability of quality after school programs alleviate working parents’ after school stress, increase productivity, decrease absenteeism and can save employers money.

- One workplace policy that reduces Parental After School Stress is providing employees with information about or referrals to local after school programs. (Barnett, 2004).
- Parents in a study from The After-School Corporation said after school programs helped them balance work and family life, with 60 percent saying they missed less work than before their children was in the program, and 59 percent saying it supported them in keeping their job. (Reisner, 2001).

Demand for quality after school programs far exceeds supply.

- A recent survey of more than 30,000 households reveals that 6.5 million youth (11%) in grades K – 12 participate in after school programs, while 14.3 million youth (25%) in grade K – 12 are responsible for taking care of themselves. (Afterschool Alliance, 2004).
- Of all the non-participating children, 30 percent, more than 15 million youth, would be likely to participate in an afterschool program if one were available in their community. (Afterschool Alliance, 2004).
- African American and Hispanic children would be even more likely to participate, with 53% of African American and 44% of Hispanic parents saying their child would be likely to participate in and afterschool program if one were available in their community. (Afterschool Alliance, 2004).

The public believes after school programs are important, and supports increased investment in after school programs

- 94 percent of respondents believe that there should be organized activities or places for children and teens to go every day that provide opportunities to learn. (Afterschool Alliance 2003 Poll).
- 77 percent of voters favor the federal government putting aside specific funds to be used for after school programs. (Afterschool Alliance 2003 Poll).
- 52 percent of voters said they were willing to increase their own state taxes by \$100 annually to pay for every child to attend an after school program. (Afterschool Alliance 2003 Poll).

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