

Connecticut After School Network

The Connecticut After School Network is a new effort underway to bring together educators, policymakers, child care providers, youth development workers, funders, parents and others interested in improving the outcomes for children and youth through after school programs. The Connecticut After School Network provides a means for joint planning, sharing of resources and best practices, and forging partnerships necessary for comprehensive statewide after school policies.

The Connecticut After School Network has three primary goals:

- Foster statewide, regional and local partnerships at all levels
- Secure resources needed to sustain new and existing after school programs
- Ensure programs are of high quality

The Connecticut After School Network operates in partnership with CSACA — Connecticut's after school professional organization.

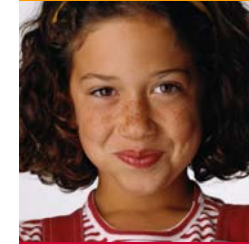
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www.ctafterschoolnetwork.org

A CALL TO ACTION: Improving After School Options in Connecticut



A Call to Action!

Because seventy-five percent of students' waking time takes place outside of regular school hours, programs that provide supervision and learning opportunities after school and during school vacations have a significant influence on positive child and youth development.

The Vision

By 2015, all Connecticut students will have opportunities to participate in safe, enriching, high-quality after school and summer programs that support academic excellence and enhance their social, physical and emotional development.

Recommendations

To make this vision a reality, the Connecticut After School Network sees the need for a coordinated system of after school opportunities for children and youth that provides a wide range of affordable, high-quality programs in a variety of settings. Specifically, we propose:

- ✓ Fully funding the competitive after school grant program in the State Department of Education to make space for approximately 4,000 additional children and youth in the next year.
- ✓ Provide state funding for existing high-quality after school programs that are losing federal funding.
- ✓ Ensure the quality of programs by providing training opportunities and technical assistance to Connecticut's after school program staff.
- ✓ Support statewide and local after school intermediary organizations to provide coordination and take advantage of economies of scale.
- ✓ Increase public awareness of the benefits of after school programs.

What you can do . . .

Business

Business leadership is crucial to an after school initiative that is in the best interest of their current and future employees. Business leaders can:

- ✓ Become members of the Leadership Circle for After School, and encourage others to join
- ✓ Disseminate information about the impact of high-quality after school programs on students
- ✓ Contact elected officials to share this information
- ✓ Host informational meetings to inform others about the need for after school and summer programs
- ✓ Explore ways to offer after school programs for their employees
- ✓ Convene and participate in a local task force to identify ways to support after school programs

Educators

Educators are well positioned to spearhead or support initiatives that help children and youth in their districts succeed. They can:

- ✓ Educate families about the available after school options and encourage them to participate
- ✓ Provide in-kind support for after school programs, such as use of school facilities or provision of transportation to and from after school programs
- ✓ Support increased communication with after school staff so that they may better complement in-school activities
- ✓ Educate local school board members about the benefits of and need for after school programs
- ✓ Include after school providers in professional development activities provided to school staff

Funders

Philanthropy plays a crucial role in after school work through the resources and leadership it provides. Funders can:

- ✓ Become members of the Leadership Circle for After School, and encourage others to join
- ✓ Form funding partnerships
- ✓ Fund projects that improve quality or access to high-quality after school programs
- ✓ Provide long-term support
- ✓ Convene or fund local after school networks that increase support and leadership for community-wide after school programs

Community

To improve outcomes for children and youth in Connecticut, an after school initiative must be a priority for the whole community. Community-based groups and nonprofit organizations should work with government, businesses, educators and other community leaders to make this initiative a community priority. They can:

- ✓ Disseminate information about the impact of high-quality after school programs on students
- ✓ Share stories of their successes and challenges
- ✓ Engage the media in this initiative
- ✓ Convene a local task force to increase support for community-wide after school development
- ✓ Contact elected officials to emphasize the importance of after school programs

Elected Officials

Elected officials are well-positioned to spearhead initiatives that help children in their districts succeed. They can:

- ✓ Become members of the Leadership Circle for After School, and encourage others to join
- ✓ Assess community needs
- ✓ Convene and participate in a local task force to identify ways to support after school programs
- ✓ Make funding for after school a priority
- ✓ Meet with other elected leaders to emphasize the importance of after school programs
- ✓ Practice and encourage child-, youth-, and family-friendly policies

Parents

Parents are the prime advocates for their children's well-being and success. They can encourage support for initiatives that help their children succeed. They can also:

- ✓ Contact elected officials to emphasize the importance of funding after school and summer programs
- ✓ Share stories of their successes and challenges
- ✓ Contact the media regarding their concerns about after school and summer programs for children and youth
- ✓ Host informational meetings to inform others about community and school-based after school objectives, needs and outcomes for children and youth
- ✓ Join the Connecticut After School Network to learn about other opportunities to support after school programs