



Afterschool Alliance

AFTERSCHOOL FOR ALL

May 7, 2010

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chairman
Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Michael B. Enzi
Ranking Member
Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Harkin and Ranking Member Enzi:

<<<Sent via email: ESEAccomments@help.senate.gov>>>

Thank you for the opportunity to submit suggestions on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The Afterschool Alliance shares the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee's vision of building a world-class education system that works for all students. We thank the Committee for its long-standing commitment to a comprehensive approach to education that includes afterschool and summer opportunities and draws on community partnerships and cross-sector collaboration.

The Afterschool Alliance works to ensure that all children, especially at-risk and struggling learners, have access to quality before-school, afterschool and summer opportunities. Our network of more than 26,000 afterschool partners is providing enriching learning opportunities for more than 8 million students nationwide by tapping community partnerships to provide engaging, hands-on activities that raise school attendance, graduation rates and overall school success. While much progress has been made, 15 million children remain unsupervised each school day and parents routinely cite the lack of available afterschool programs as a key challenge. Before-school, afterschool and summer learning programs provide critical supports to students and their families and contribute to educating the whole child. As such we respectfully submit the following concerns regarding the Administration's ESEA Reauthorization Blueprint, followed by comprehensive recommendations, which are focused largely on the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program and include other provisions within ESEA that provide learning opportunities outside of traditional school hours.

Concerns Regarding the Administration's ESEA Reauthorization Blueprint

Rather than divert existing 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) funding to other uses, ESEA should provide separate and enhanced funding streams for:

- The 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program;
- Full Service Community Schools; and
- Expanding the school day or year.

Current law should be maintained which provides funds for the 21st CCLC program by formula to the states and District of Columbia, with each State Education Agency (SEA) running a competitive grant program in which local education agencies (LEA), community-based organizations or faith-based organizations can be the lead entity. All grant applications should require school/community partnerships and a strong alignment between the community-based organization and the school.

Flexibility for the 21st CCLC program should be maintained to allow local communities to determine whether the programming occurs at school, at non-school community-based facilities or a combination of locations.



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Eligibility for the 21st CCLC program state-run competitions should be based on Title I status.

With regard to the Carol M. White PEP Grants, the grant program should continue to be open to community-based organization and funding should not be consolidated with other programs.

Specific Recommendations for ESEA Reauthorization

Improving 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21stCCLC)

- Ensure 21st CCLC funded efforts are connected to college- and career-readiness goals.
 - Afterschool programming should be aligned with school and district learning objectives and coursework.
 - Grant applications for 21st CCLC should include descriptions of how 21stCCLC funded activities complement and enhance efforts to meet college- and career-readiness goals.
- Increase flexibility of 21stCCLC allowable activities.
 - Maintain focus on ensuring kids have safe, supervised learning environments beyond the traditional school day.
 - Continue to balance academic programming with enrichment activities.
 - Add physical activity, health and nutrition education as allowable activities.
 - Encourage community engagement by allowing funded programs to offer the services and facilities of the school building (e.g., computer, library, arts and music, lab, gym access) to the neighboring community, with appropriate supervision and coordination.
- Encourage programs to operate in schools partnering with at least one community-based organization, however, continue the flexibility of allowing non-school community centers when appropriate.
- Enhance sustainability of programs by giving states flexibility to make grants renewable based on performance.
 - Grantees would have to apply for renewal and document how additional resources will complement and enhance 21st CCLC funding.
- Use existing research base and infrastructure to increase overall quality of 21st CCLC programs.
 - Researchers at the Institute of Education Sciences and Harvard Family Research Project (among others) have identified factors of afterschool programs that research and evaluation show are critical for creating positive outcomes. Based on this research, applicants for 21st CCLC funds should be required to provide a plan for ensuring that programs:
 - Provide engaging learning experiences that are tailored to youth interests, needs, and schedules and offer enriching opportunities for youth to be exposed to new ideas, new challenges, and new people.
 - Intentionally align afterschool with school instruction and allow opportunities for autonomy and choice.
 - Maximize student participation and attendance.
 - Provide appropriate supervision and structure and adapt instruction to individual and small group needs.
 - Provide adequate physical and psychological safety.
 - Effectively manage and prepare staff.
 - Effectively develop, utilize, and leverage partnerships with a variety of stakeholders, especially families, schools, and communities.
 - Assess program performance and use results to improve the quality of the program.
 - Give states the option to expand T&TA Set-Aside up to 5 percent to improve quality and availability.
 - Address infrastructure and capacity needs used for TA, professional development, systems building, planning assistance, and program evaluation.
 - Ensure local programs have access to funding to implement effective training and technical assistance to improve their outcomes.
 - Only expand set-aside if it would not impact funding to current grantees.



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- Increase authorized funding and annual appropriation for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program.
 - Currently funding a fraction of children and youth that need afterschool. More than 15.1 million children continue to be unsupervised and at risk after the school day ends.
 - Evaluations show 21st CCLC funds contribute to improved student outcomes. Over 146 independent studies show positive academic and behavioral outcomes linked to graduation and student success.
 - Average 21st CCLC funding per student is \$776, which is less than 1/3 of the full cost of afterschool. In local communities, 21st CCLC funding is complemented by state, local and private funding.
 - Increased funding authorization levels are critical if allowable activities and focus of program are broadened.

Improve Coordination and Alignment Between Schools and Programs

- Eliminate barriers and actively encourage coordination between LEAs/schools and community-based organizations around afterschool and summer learning, to include:
 - Sharing of collected student data.
 - Aligning school-day classroom based learning objectives with academic and enrichment programs offered before school, afterschool and during the summer.
 - Specifically with regard to LEA provided summer school, coordinate community-based organization programming with daily summer school sessions. Allow flexibility for half day enrichment and half day academic summer program models.
 - Allow flexibility for community-based organizations to be fiscal agents for school-based afterschool collaborative programs.
 - Ensure that collaborative partnerships with community-based organizations are strengthened, not weakened, by the connection to school improvement.

Adding Time to the School Day or Year/Extending Learning Time

- Funding for adding time to the school day/year should be independent of 21st CCLC and is most appropriate as part of a comprehensive school turnaround/reform model.
- Federally funded initiatives to increase the length of the school day, week or year should require equal partnerships with at least one community-based organization or other nonprofit entities that have experience in youth development or afterschool programs.
- Local communities should be ensured the flexibility to design and implement added time during the school day/year through partnerships between LEAs and community-based organizations (CBOs) or other nonprofit entities, in which either the CBO or the LEA can be the lead fiscal agent.
- Additional school time should be used for expanded academic enrichment and engagement through instruction and hands-on and community learning opportunities for core academic subjects (including English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography) and other subjects (including physical education and service learning) to help improve academic, social, health and emotional gains for children and contribute to a well-rounded education.

Improve Supplemental Education Services (SES)

- Make SES funds more accessible to comprehensive afterschool programs. Research shows that tutoring is more effective in the context of broader, comprehensive afterschool programs.
- Allow Community Advisory Boards made up of parents to interview and select a small number of specific SES providers that eligible students can access for services. Provide guidance to Advisory Boards that stresses the need to provide more comprehensive services that reduce barriers to learning, in addition to providing academic support.
- Allow LEAs, based on a needs assessment, and working through subgrants or subcontracts with community partners, to use these funds for a) comprehensive services to address non-academic barriers to learning, b) increased learning time opportunities including after school programs, c) expanded parent and family involvement activities that have a proven impact on a parent's ability to support their child's academic achievement and d) tutoring.
- Ensure inclusion/coordination of SES with other comprehensive afterschool programs to minimize competition between programs and maximize coordination and alignment.



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- Direct states to increase emphasis on a comprehensive service delivery model that encourages existing school-based, community based, faith-based and other public agency afterschool programs to become SES providers; prioritize outreach and TA, encourage partnerships.
- Eliminate barriers to using SES to fund summer learning programs.
- Do not limit SES funds to schools or districts in their third year of needing improvement but rather encourage a broad use of Title I funds for extended academic support after school.

Afterschool for Older Youth

- Incorporate the provisions of S. 2785, the After-School Partnerships Improve Results in Education (ASPIRE) Act into any new federal investments targeted at middle and high school reform. Introduced in the 111th Congress by Senator Blanche Lincoln and by Representatives Betty McCollum and Nita Lowey in the 110th Congress, the ASPIRE Act contains the following key elements:
 - Local and national afterschool “centers of excellence” that serve low-income and/or low-performing students.
 - High quality programs, academic enrichment, civic engagement and service learning opportunities, and marketable skills development. Include a range of allowable activities including mathematics and science education; language arts, writing, and reading; history, geography, or social studies; career technical education activity; business and entrepreneurial education program; health, physical activity and wellness; environmental and conservation; or arts and music education.
 - Tied to high school reform and college access.

Title I

- Build on ARRA Title I guidance. Include language explicitly listing afterschool and summer learning as an allowable use of funds.

Accountability and Assessing Student Performance

- Ensure that measures of student success show growth and improvement over time and student achievement and success to include preliminary indicators such as improved school day attendance, better classroom grades, positive attitude towards school, daily program attendance, on time advancement to the next grade level and on a pathway to high school graduation and career- and college-readiness. Ensure that data collection includes the above indicators.
- Stagger accountability provisions to reflect the time needed to affect change. For instance, make improved attendance and reduced disciplinary actions an early indicator of success and improved test scores a later indicator.
- Require states and districts to collect data and report on the amount of federal funds used from Title I, 21st CCLC, and IDEA, and the number of children served, through both afterschool and summer learning programs separately.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our comments with the Committee. We look forward to working with you throughout the ESEA reauthorization process.

Sincerely,

Jodi Grant
Executive Director