



EDITORIAL MEMORANDUM

TO: Editorial Page Writers and Editors
RE: New Research Shows that Afterschool Programs Work
DT: January 2008

Those of us who want education funding decisions to be based on sound research about what works for our children are pleased to know that a new study finds that high-quality afterschool programs make a significant difference in academic performance. The research is the latest, and one of the most compelling, in a long line of studies demonstrating that strong afterschool programs produce positive, measurable results for students.

The "[Promising Afterschool Programs](#)" study, released in October by scholars Deborah Lowe Vandell and Kim M. Pierce of the University of California-Irvine, and Elizabeth R. Reischer of Policy Studies Associates, examined 35 afterschool programs serving nearly 3,000 low-income students across the nation. What united the programs was that they were all judged by the researchers to be of "high quality." Specifically, before and during the period of the study, programs evidenced supportive relationships between staff and children and among children, and offered rich and varied academic support, recreation, arts opportunities, and other enrichment activities.

At the end of the two-year period of the study, researchers concluded that "regular participation in high-quality afterschool programs is linked to significant gains in standardized test scores and work habits as well as reductions in behavior problems among disadvantaged students." In short, high-quality afterschool programs produce results.

Unfortunately, many of our nation's afterschool programs have enormous trouble finding the sustained funding they need to keep their doors open and offer students the activities and support they deserve. One of the principal funding sources for afterschool programs is 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the federal government's main funding stream for afterschool. The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* called for steady but modest funding increases that would have invested \$2.5 billion in afterschool in 2007. But until this past December, none of the authorized increases came to pass; indeed, the initiative's funding suffered in recent years because of a series of freezes and cuts.

Finally last year, the new Congress approved a modest increase of \$100 million as part of the omnibus appropriations bill the President signed into law in late December. That brings total funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers to \$1.1 billion. The increase is enough to support afterschool for an additional 100,000 children, but millions more have no safe, supervised activities each day after the school bell rings.

This increase, which will flow to the states this summer, is only a down payment on what would be required to bring funding to the \$2.5 billion level authorized in the *No Child Left Behind Act*. For the sake of the approximately 14.3 million children who have no adult supervision in the afternoons, we need to do better.

The burden of paying for afterschool programs, of course, should not fall solely on the federal government. Local and state governments, parents, philanthropists, and the business community can and must help as well.

In the absence of sufficient support from all sectors, children and families suffer. I hope you'll find space on your editorial pages to urge a greater investment in afterschool programs. If you have any questions or need further information, please contact Lisa Lederer or Gretchen Wright at 202-371-1999 or visit www.afterschoolalliance.org. Thank you.