

**AFTER SCHOOL
PROGRAMMING:
A PRESSING NEED
AND
A PUBLIC PRIORITY**

OCTOBER 2004
FOURTH EDITION



COLORADO FOUNDATION
FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

**FOURTH IN A SERIES OF EDUCATION POLICY PAPERS
SUPPORTED BY
THE W.H. DONNER FOUNDATION**

PREPARED BY
COLORADO FOUNDATION FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN
DENVER, COLORADO

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The publication and dissemination of this document would not be possible without the generous support of the **W.H. Donner Foundation**. The W.H. Donner Foundation is focused on creating a legacy for future generations, in part, through its generous support for research and innovation efforts in education. We hope this publication will spark debate and help inform educators, after school programs, and policymakers as they deliberate issues and allocate resources to invest in the future of our youth

Much of our learning about effective after school programs described in this document came from the vision and financial support of **The Colorado Trust**. The Colorado Trust's five-and-one-half-year, \$11 million After School Initiative is designed to support and enhance effective after school programs that provide youth with opportunities for constructive use of their time and skill building. Targeting youth between 4th and 9th grades, these 32 programs implement multifaceted, culturally appropriate strategies that promote positive youth development. The Colorado Trust has provided funding to the Colorado Foundation for Families and Children to provide training and technical assistance in support of after school programs in Denver and Northeast Colorado as they implement the latest research-based best practices in after school programming.

THE COLORADO FOUNDATION FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

The Colorado Foundation for Families and Children(CFFC) was founded in 1991 as a private nonprofit partner to state government. The role and mission of CFFC is to improve the effectiveness of organizations and individuals who serve children, youth, and their families in educational, health, and human service settings. CFFC carries out its mission using three major strategies:

- Promote promising practices through training and technical assistance
- Improve the delivery of services by developing partnerships among funders, organizations, and communities
- Inform public policy development through research, evaluation, and information dissemination

Author: Carol Mehesy, MS
Editor: Kiki Sayre, BA
Design: Marvin Klinger, MLIS

Copyright © 2004 COLORADO FOUNDATION FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN. All rights reserved. No part of this publication, including interior design, cover design, or content, may be reproduced or transmitted in any form, by any means (electronic, photocopying, recording, or otherwise), without the prior written permission of the COLORADO FOUNDATION FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN.



I. INTRODUCTION

Since the year 2000, after school programming has emerged as a top public priority. A number of community organizations, schools, and religious organizations now offer a variety of programs to meaningfully engage youth in worthwhile activities for their physical, emotional, and intellectual development.

A 1999 poll by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and JC Penney found that 90 percent of registered voters strongly support after school programming, and two-thirds would be willing to contribute an extra \$10 per year in taxes in order to provide every school-age youth with \$1,000 of quality after school care (After School Alliance 2000). Policymakers have responded and funding has increased dramatically over the last five years.

From 1998 to 2002, federal funding for the 21st Century Learning Centers increased from \$40 million to \$1 billion dollars (Kane 2004). States have followed suit with California launching the largest effort—a \$433 million tax-funded after school initiative, followed by Kentucky with a \$37 million initiative, Wisconsin providing \$20 million, and New York and Maryland with \$10 million each committed to providing after school programming (Hollister 2003).

Private foundations are also investing heavily in after school programs, with The Colorado Trust investing \$11 million in Colorado and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation investing \$71 million nationwide.

The National Council of Mayors has added its support, adopting a resolution in 2004 calling for full funding of after school programs through continued full funding of the 21st Century Learning Centers (National Council of Mayors 2004).

Two factors are likely responsible for the increase in support: the growing number of children whose parents are working during the after school hours and the pressures on youth and schools to perform academically to meet new test standards being implemented with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

After school programming first entered public discussion with the term “latchkey kids,” as an increasing number of children coming home to an empty house after school while their parents worked. According to the U.S. Department of Education, 69 percent of all married-couple families with school-age children have both parents working outside the home, with this number rising to 75 percent for single-parent families (U.S. Department of Education 2000). This gap between parents’ work schedules and children’s school schedules is leaving an estimated 7 to 15 million children without parental supervision for up to 25 hours per week (Elling 2003). This is especially disturbing because research has demonstrated that much of the risky behavior that youth engage in, such as sexual activity, drug and alcohol use, and juvenile crime, occurs during the after school hours of 3–6 p.m. (Hollister 2003). The desire to provide children with supervision during the after school hours, coupled with the desire to prevent these risky behaviors, initially fueled much of the demand from parents and the public for after school programming.

Once after school programming began to take hold, other stakeholders, including schools, began to look at the opportunities that the after school hours presented. Driven by education reform, which has placed increased pressure on children and schools to improve academic performance, schools began to view after school hours as an opportunity to provide additional academic instruction and support to those students who were struggling the most. This alliance seemed to make sense as many after school programs were initially developed in communities and schools that had high concentrations of disadvantaged youth. These after school programs were already serving a group of youth identified as being most likely to be at risk for academic failure, including a high percentage of minority youth and a high percentage of youth who qualified for the free and reduced-rate lunch program (Kane 2004).

II. COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

The differing needs and expectations of parents and schools have created tensions and misconceptions within the after school movement. Parents sought out after school programs to provide supervision for their children, while schools looked to after school programs to provide additional academic instruction. These often competing expectations from parents and schools leave many after school programs stuck in the middle trying to balance “time on task” for academics with the flexibility of a drop-in childcare program.

Recent studies have demonstrated that effective after school programs can meet the needs of both parents and schools, but only in the context of comprehensive, research-based, positive youth development programming. “Positive youth development programs are developmentally appropriate programs designed to prepare adolescents for productive adulthood by providing opportunities and supports to help them gain competencies and knowledge needed to meet the increasing challenges they will face as they mature” (Roth and Brooks-Dunn 2000).

Programs must overcome two common misconceptions about after school programming: that after school programs are childcare, and that after school programs are an extension of the school day.

Currently, many after school programs are working to clearly define these effective program components for themselves, as well as for parents, funders, and other stakeholders. To do so, programs must overcome two common misconceptions about after school programming: that after school programs are childcare, and that after school programs are an extension of the school day. Overcoming these common misconceptions is critical as evidence is now emerging that an exclusive focus on after school programs as either childcare or an extension of the school day may in fact undermine the potential effectiveness of after school programs altogether.

MISCONCEPTION #1 – AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS ARE CHILDCARE

Because of the vital role after school programs play in providing youth with a safe, supervised environment, many people have a misconception that the programs are merely childcare for older youth. Parents often view after school programs primarily as a safe place for their children to hang out while they work, or on days when the youth do not participate in other activities, such as sports. Therefore, parents often utilize after school programming in a sporadic and inconsistent manner. Research shows that the one factor that most limits a program’s positive impact on youth is inconsistent attendance (Fashola 1998; Kane 2004).

Applying the childcare model to after school programs is limiting in several ways. First, it defines after school programming based solely on its most basic function—providing a safe and supervised environment for youth. This definition excludes the major role that after school programs play in fostering positive youth development and providing youth with the skills and opportunities needed to succeed in school, in their communities, and in life.

Second, this definition subjects after school programming to a limited standard of quality and accountability for this age group—the childcare licensing process. The childcare licensing process was developed for early childhood care and later adapted for older youth in school-age care. Licensing focuses on the two basic aspects of quality described above: safety and supervision. As a result, the majority of the standards and measures of quality focus on the size and condition of facilities, and the number of staff and their level of education and training. While these two measures are very important for ensuring basic program quality, utilizing the licensing process alone fails to provide after school programs with comprehensive measures of accountability or quality that are directly suited to older youth and the after school field.

MISCONCEPTION #2 – AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS ARE AN EXTENSION OF THE SCHOOL DAY

Schools, facing increased pressure to improve all students’ performance on standardized tests, are also looking toward after school programs to provide additional academic instruction and time on task for students who are struggling. This recent emphasis on incorporating academic instruction and tutoring into the after school arena has created a perception of after school as being merely an extension of the school day. While there are a limited number of after school programs that are sponsored by schools and structured as an extended school day, this model does not represent the field as a whole.

Focusing exclusively on academic content or aligning too closely with the school day can be limiting for after school programs in several ways. Viewing after school programs as an extension of the school day fails to capture what makes after school programming unique and different from the school day. After school programs have different mandates, funding, and goals than most schools, giving them more flexibility and allowing them to develop approaches that can compliment rather than duplicate school efforts. These differences are critical to success, especially in engaging youth who are most at risk and who are not successful in a traditional school setting.

After school programs have different mandates, funding, and goals than most school, giving them more flexibility and allowing them to develop approaches that can compliment rather than duplicate school efforts. These differences are critical to success, especially in engaging youth who are most at risk and who are not successful in a traditional school setting.

Effective after school programs differ from the school day and compliment school efforts in several key ways, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Differences in School Programs Versus After School Programs	
School Day	After School Programs
Primary Focus - Academic Developing core skills and knowledge in content areas, such as mathematics, reading, and writing.	Primary Focus - Positive Youth Development Developing multiple skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving, and interpersonal skills needed for success in the 21 st Century.
Primary Learning Strategies - Classroom Instruction and Curriculum Utilizing classroom instruction format and standards-based curriculum to facilitate learning in core content.	Primary Learning Strategies - Low Staff-To-Student Ratios and Individual Instruction Utilizing low staff-to-student ratios and mentoring to develop youth's relationships with caring adults to facilitate learning.
Primary Approach to At-Risk-Youth- Zero Tolerance Policies Schools are often forced to suspend or expel youth who engage in high-risk behaviors, such as drug and alcohol use and violence.	Primary Approach to At-Risk-Youth - Targeting Prevention After school programs focus on prevention of at-risk behaviors, such as early sexual activity, drug and alcohol use, and violence, through life skills activities and instruction.

It can be helpful for after school programs that incorporate academic instruction or tutoring to align their instruction with the school standards and work closely with the youth's teachers. However, it is important to allow after school programs the flexibility to maintain their broader emphasis and unique identity.

III. COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

Effective after school programs provide a variety of positive youth development opportunities that set after school programs apart from both traditional childcare and the traditional school setting in several ways. First, after school programming is grounded in the latest prevention science, which emphasizes building on youth's strengths rather than deficits—one of the main tenets of positive youth development. Researchers Lerner, Fish, and Weinberg studied what youth needed for healthy development and came up with a definition of positive youth development that encompasses the “five C’s.”

After school programs that integrate positive youth development encompass the five C’s:

- Competence in academic, social, and vocational areas
- Confidence, or a positive identity
- Connection, or healthy relations to community, family, and peers
- Character, or positive values, integrity, and moral commitment
- Caring and compassion (Lerner et al. 2000)

Positive youth development represents a dramatic shift from identifying youth who are at risk for engaging in negative behaviors and providing them with intervention, to a focus on achieving positive outcomes for all youth (Lerner et al. 2000). Recent research has demonstrated that in addition to encouraging positive outcomes in all youth, the positive approach to youth development is effective in preventing problem behavior in troubled youth (Catalano et al. 1999).

Developing the Whole Child

The second distinguishing feature of after school programming is its emphasis on developing the “whole youth”—the youth’s physical, intellectual, and emotional well-being—and equipping him or her for success in school and in life. A study by Johns Hopkins University found that effective after school programs are capable of addressing three developmental needs critical to the healthy development of the whole youth: academic, recreational, and cultural/social (Fashola 1998). To be effective in developing the whole youth, after school programs must be intentional about offering programming in each of these three areas.

Academic Achievement

Effective after school programs can support academic achievement in several ways:

- Providing a low staff-to-student ratio that allows for individual instruction
- Providing students with homework help
- Providing students with targeted instruction to build skills in reading and math
- Providing enrichment activities that have been proven to improve academic performance

After school programs have an average staff-to-student ratio of 1 to 10, whereas the average staff-to-student ratio in many schools often exceeds a ratio of 1 to 25. The lower staff-to-student ratio in after school programs allows students to receive individual academic instruction and follow-up. This is especially critical for low-income students who are struggling in school and students who are learning English as a second language. Studies have shown that low-income and minority students who participate in after school programs performed better in reading and mathematics, and were rated by their teachers as having better work habits and better conduct than their peers who did not attend an after school program (Fashola 1998).

The lower staff-to-student ratio in after school programs allows students to receive individual academic instruction and follow-up. This is especially critical for low-income students who are struggling in school and students who are learning English as a second language.

In addition to providing students with more one-on-one instruction than a traditional classroom, after school programs utilize a variety of strategies to improve students' academic performance. The majority of after school programs provide youth with dedicated time for homework help, and additional instruction as needed. Most programs also provide individual follow-up by contacting teachers on a regular basis to ensure that homework is being turned in and to find out where an individual student is struggling. Many after school programs also provide targeted instruction in reading and math by teachers and qualified tutors.

After school programs often utilize enrichment activities, such as chess, educational games, and interactive learning centers, to supplement students' academic instruction and improve academic performance. Studies have shown that students who play chess once a week are able to improve a variety of skills in math, reading, complex problem solving, and other skills associated with academic achievement (Liptrap 1999).

Recreational Activities

Providing youth with a variety of recreational activities contributes to the healthy development of the whole youth and gives the young person opportunities to develop important skills that are not always taught during the school day. After school programs generally offer a variety of recreational activities, including board games, team building games, and sports. Participation in organized activities and games helps youth develop social skills and values, such as teamwork, good sportsmanship, coping strategies, and problem-solving skills (Fashola 1998).

The opportunities that after school programs provide youth to learn to work as part of a group are invaluable in helping youth develop appropriate social skills, healthy communication, and conflict-resolution skills. Studies have found that youth who participated in after school programming had better peer relationships than those who did not (Fashola 1998).

Cultural/Social Enrichment

Developing a healthy sense of self is key to a youth's success as an adult. Youth are focused on exploring and developing their sense of self by trying on different roles and personas in late childhood and early adolescence (Gentry and Campbell 2002). After school programs seek to positively influence this process by providing youth with role models, opportunities to explore their own and other's cultures, chances to develop their different talents and interests, and opportunities to develop critical thinking and communication skills.

One of the most effective components of after school programming is mentoring.

Mentoring helps youth explore their sense of self by providing them with positive role models who can coach them in social skills—such as starting conversations, listening, expressing emotions appropriately, learning empathy, and maintaining appropriate personal boundaries (Gentry and Campbell 2002). Mentoring is particularly effective when role models represent someone the youth can identify with or look up to in terms of gender and culture (Mehesy 2003). Youth who have relationships with mentors for just one year are less likely to use drugs or engage in violent behavior, and more likely to have better school attendance and performance (Quinn 1999).

Another critical role that after school programs play in helping youth to develop a healthy sense of self is providing them with cultural opportunities and a chance to explore their talents. Recent budget cuts have forced many schools to cut back on music, art, and other extracurricular activities, and after school programs have stepped in to provide these services. In many cases, low-income students would not have otherwise have access to music, dance, art, or other cultural activities (Fashola 1998).

Finally, after school programs provide youth with the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills and have tangible experiences with communication, cooperation, and civic engagement. Many programs provide youth with the opportunity to apply their skills and talents in the real-world context of their community through community service projects. Not only does community service provide youth with an opportunity to further develop their skills and talents in a concrete way, it is also associated with other positive outcomes. In one study, girls who volunteered were significantly less likely to become pregnant and made more positive academic gains than girls who did not volunteer (Allen et al. 1997).

Youth generally work as a group to develop and implement their own projects through a process that encourages critical thinking, cooperation and teamwork, communication, and civic engagement (See Table 2).

Table 2: Process for Determining Youth-led Community Service Projects	
Action Steps	Strategies
Assessing the Community	Youth use photo-journals, interviews with key adults and leaders, CommunityYouthmapping®, and door-to-door surveys to determine the needs and strengths of their community.
Deciding on a project	Based on the needs identified in the community and the interests of the youth involved, the group chooses a project to benefit the community. Common projects include: neighborhood beautification, adopt-a-grandparent programs, mentoring or tutoring younger children, and education programs, such as get out the vote, diabetes prevention, or energy conservation awareness.
Implementing the project	The group works to implement the project by developing resources and raising money, assigning roles and responsibilities, scheduling activities, and contacting community partners.
Evaluating the project	Youth evaluate the success of their project. Did it meet the identified community need? Were they satisfied with their efforts? Was the community satisfied?

Through community service projects, youth learn valuable skills that go beyond academics, including:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing community needs • Citizenship • Evaluation • Group decision making • Implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Problem solving • Resource development • Self-directed learning
---	---

Most importantly, young people learn to apply these skills, along with their academic skills, in relevant real-world contexts outside of school.

IV. BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

Efforts to rigorously evaluate after school programs are still underway, with only a few studies completed that meet the highest standards of evaluation (i.e. utilizing control or comparison groups). Initial results show some encouraging trends. Studies have shown that participation in after school programming can yield significant benefits for youth, families, and society. In many studies, the greatest benefits were realized among low-income students. These studies found that youth who are enrolled in effective after school programs that included academic support, mentoring, recreation, and cultural/social enrichment often fared better than their peers in a variety of areas, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Improved Behavior Resulting from Participation in After School Programs	
Areas of Improvement	Results
Academically	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performed better in reading (Posner and Vandrell 1994; Fashola 1998; Huang et al. 2000) • Performed better in math (Fashola 1998) • Improved their grades (Kane 2004) • Had better school attendance (Harvard Family Research Project 2003; Kane 2004) • Had better work habits and homework completion (Fashola 1998; Kane 2004)
Socially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Had better peer relationships (Fashola 1998) • Had better conduct and few disciplinary reports (Harvard Family Research Project 2003) • Had better communication skills (Harvard Family Research Project 2003)
Healthy Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were less likely to use drugs or alcohol (Harvard Family Research Project 2003) • Were less likely to engage in violent behavior (Quinn 1999; Harvard Family Research Project 2003) • Had better decision making skills (Harvard Family Research Project 2003) • Had better problem-solving skills (Harvard Family Research Project 2003)

V. COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

Cost-benefit analysis for after school programs traditionally look at the benefits of two assumed impacts of after school programs: reduced crime and improved academic performance leading to high school graduation. The most comprehensive cost-benefit analysis completed to date was recently conducted by Rose Institute on behalf of the State of California (See Table 4). California is investing \$433 million in after school programs—an equivalent of a per student investment of \$5 per day for a maximum of \$900 per student per year and an estimated “lifetime” cost of \$10,038 per student (Brown et al. 2002). The lifetime cost assumes that students will be enrolled in the after school program throughout their school career.

The study looked at six effects of California’s investment, including: reduced childcare costs, increased schooling costs, improved school performance, increased salary levels, reduced crime costs, and reduced welfare costs (Brown 2002). The study found that for each dollar California invested in providing an at-risk child or youth with an after school program, the state could expect a return of between \$8.92 and \$12.90 (Brown et al. 2002). The majority of this benefit is derived from achieving positive outcomes for a fraction of the most at-risk youth—namely, diverting them from a path of crime. Non-crime benefits ranged between \$2.99 and \$4.05 for every dollar invested (Brown et al. 2002).

Table 4: Estimated Savings Resulting from After School Programs

Estimated Effect	Total Benefits per Student	
	Lower Estimates	Higher Estimates
Reduced Child Care Costs	\$ 889	\$ 1,777
Increased Schooling Costs	(\$ 989)	(\$ 742)
Improved School Performance	\$ 447	\$ 809
Increased Salary Level	\$ 29,415	\$ 38,284
Reduced Crime Costs	\$ 59,425	\$ 88,835
Reduced Welfare Costs	\$ 335	\$ 502
Total	\$ 89,522	\$129,425
Cost of Program	\$ 10,038	\$ 10,038
Net Benefit	\$ 79,484	\$119,427

Source: Brown et al., *The Costs and Benefits of After School Programs: The Estimated Effects of the After School Education and Safety Act of 2002*.

VI. MODELS OF STATEWIDE SUPPORT

Public Model

California is an example of a publicly funded statewide model currently supporting the implementation of after school programming. California began its support in 1998 with \$85 million allocated to the After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program (Brown et al. 2002). Four years later, the state allocated an additional \$433 million to reach an additional 455,000 students with the After School Education and Safety Program Act of 2002 (Brown et al. 2002). This act gives priority to schools with at least 50 percent of enrolled students eligible for free and reduced-rate meals. Grants generally do not exceed \$75,000 per elementary school and \$100,000 per middle school, and they require a 50 percent match.

Once full funding is allocated and local match is secured, the initiative will serve an estimated 610,000 at-risk youth, or approximately 10 percent of California's children in grades K-9 (Brown et al. 2002).

Private Model

In addition to publicly funded statewide after school initiatives, many private philanthropic organizations have made significant investments in after school programming. Nationally, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation has invested \$71 million, with \$3.8 million invested in creating 18 statewide after school networks to support the development of after school programming (Elling 2003).

The goals of these networks include:

- Forging the partnerships necessary to develop comprehensive statewide policies
- Sharing resources and best practices
- Developing sustainable funding

States with After School Networks Funded by the Mott Foundation	
Arizona	New Hampshire
California	New Mexico
Connecticut	New York
Illinois	North Carolina
Iowa	Ohio
Kansas	Rhode Island
Massachusetts	South Carolina
Missouri	Vermont
Nebraska	Washington

In Colorado, The Colorado Trust, a private grant-making foundation, has invested \$11 million to support 32 after school programs for youth in grades 4–9 across the state. The focus of this initiative is building the capacity of after school programs to integrate research-based best practices in five core elements of effective after school programming:

- Positive youth development
- Cultural competency
- Partnerships
- Evaluation
- Sustainability

In addition, The Colorado Trust is currently partnering with the Colorado Department of Education, local government entities, and other philanthropic organizations to support the development of a statewide after school network in Colorado. Similar to the networks in other states, the goals of this network include:

- Keeping policymakers informed regarding the need for and impacts of after school programs in Colorado
- Disseminating information on trends and best practices in after school programs in Colorado
- Maintaining database of after school programs in Colorado
- Providing training and technical assistance to after school programs in implementing research-based practices
- Coordinating efforts to evaluate the impact of after school programs in Colorado.



VII. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The emerging priority of after school programs poses a variety of challenges and implications for policymakers. Positive outcomes associated with youth who attend after school programs have prompted a rapid proliferation of programs by a variety of stakeholders—including schools, churches, and youth-serving organizations. As a result, programs take place in a variety of settings, each with different funding sources, goals, and expectations. This has led to three key policy issues related to maintaining coordination and oversight, and moving beyond a fragmented system:

- Comprehensive statewide policies
- A common set of quality standards and evaluation measures
- Sustainable funding

Comprehensive Statewide Policies for After School Programming

After school programs are currently housed in a variety of organizations across sectors, including schools, churches, community-based organizations, public housing complexes, and large youth-serving organizations, such as Boys and Girls Clubs. As a result, the field has evolved as a fragmented system with a variety of funding sources, goals, program types, and policies. Because otherwise cause after school programming straddles so many sectors, the need has emerged for statewide policy boards with representatives from the various sectors to come together to develop comprehensive statewide policies for after school programming. These policies will likely address such critical issues as developing common standards of quality and/or licensing, evaluating the impacts of after school care, and developing sustainable funding.

A Common Set of Quality Standards and Evaluation Measures

Currently, numerous standards of quality are applied to after school programs by a variety of stakeholders, including funders, parents, and licensing officials. The majority of after school programs measure quality based on a kaleidoscope of standards put forth by their various funding sources. The challenges facing public and private funders in agreeing on a set of common quality standards has produced a multiplicity of individual sets of standards among individual programs.

The most common measurements of quality currently available are childcare licensing standards. However, these measurements were developed for elementary school-age childcare settings and have been applied to after school programming based on the misconception that after school programs are childcare. For example, current childcare licensing standards focus heavily on safety, defined primarily as a function of providing a safe physical environment in which toxic cleaners are locked up, hot water temperatures do not exceed a certain level, and staff are properly screened. While these are appropriate measures of safety for younger children, older youth are more likely to be dealing with more complex safety issues, such as bullying, gang involvement, sexual experimentation, suicide, and substance use.

In addition to the increased complexity of risks that older youth in after school programs face, their programming also focuses on supporting youth in attaining more advanced developmental levels than childcare programs for younger children. Current childcare licensing standards in Colorado focus on providing a developmentally rich environment for younger children that includes such features as adequate playground equipment, art supplies, and manipulative toys (State of Colorado Department of Health and Human Services 2004). After school programs working with older youth target developmental needs, such as identity development, interpersonal relationships, conflict resolution, academic skills, and vocational and career interests. A developmentally rich environment for these youth relies on access to technology, adequate space and materials for academic instruction and tutoring, materials for team-building and life-skills activities, and involvement in community service projects.

The contrasting needs of young children in childcare and youth in after school programs highlight the need to develop a common set of quality standards that are appropriate and accurate measures of positive youth development programming and the after school setting.

Several resources are available, including the National After School Association’s *Standards for Quality School-Age Care*, and *Accountability for After-School Care: Devising Standards and Measuring Adherence to Them*, a recent study by the RAND Corporation. The RAND study suggests a list of standards that have been shown by research to produce effective programs (Beckett et al. 2001). (See Table 5)

Table 5: Standards for Measuring the Quality of After School Programs	
Categories	Practices
Staff Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training • Education • Compensation • Experience • Turnover
Program Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of activities • Flexibility of programming • Emotional climate • Total enrollment • Mixing of age groups • Child-to-staff ratio • Age-appropriate activities • Space/facilities • Alignment with the school day • Materials • Attention to safety and health • Clear goals • Evaluation of program
Community Contacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of families • Use of volunteers • Partnerships with other community-based organizations and schools

Source: RAND Corporation, *Accountability for After-School Care: Devising Standards and Measuring Adherence to Them* (2002).

A similar dilemma exists in the field of evaluation with regards to after school programs. Many programs have little understanding of what outcomes they should be measuring based on the structure of their programs. In addition, limited funding is available for these evaluation efforts, so few programs are able to conduct rigorous evaluations. As a result, most after school programs measure a variety of outcomes, ranging from positive youth development, to prevention, to academics, based on the requirements of their funding sources.

VIII. SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

The proliferation of after school programs has also raised the issue of sustainability. Several large funding streams currently exist, including the federal 21st Century Learning Centers Grants, funding new and existing after school programs across the nation. In addition, several states are currently implementing large privately funded initiatives, such as The Colorado Trust's After School Initiative, the Massachusetts United Way's Keeping Kids on Track, and The After School Corporation (TASC) in New York. However, many of these initiatives are due to sunset within the next year or two for original recipients of the grants. As a result, many programs and communities will likely be struggling to maintain services at the current level and will be less able to respond to the increasing need for services brought on, in part, by continuing budget cuts in school districts. Yet, clearly there is a continuing need for, and much public support for, after school programming.

STATE MODEL

As more and more states and communities face decreased funding, it will be helpful to examine emerging models for sustainable statewide funding, such as California's After School Education and Safety Program Act of 2002. This act was initiated as a voter-approved initiative, called Proposition 49. Proposition 49 does not draw monies from California's education funds, nor does it establish any new taxes or bonds. Instead, it is funded by growth in the state's general revenues. In order for funds to be appropriated for Proposition 49, noneducation General Fund appropriations must exceed a particular base amount. To set the base, the proposition takes the highest level of noneducation funding between FY 2000 and FY 2003 and adjusts for inflation and cost of living. In other words, the proposition contains a "trigger clause" that increases funding for after school programming only when education funds are allocated and the General Fund revenues exceed the base amount (California Department of Education 2003). The proposition is projected to increase state after school spending by as much as \$550 million per year.

PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

United Way has also emerged as a strong partner in promoting sustainable after school initiatives in many states and communities, ranging from the State of Massachusetts to Denver, Colorado. In Massachusetts, local United Ways have partnered with Massachusetts 2020 and the State Legislature to promote quality after school programming statewide. The program builds on the success of a \$24 million effort to provide high quality after school programs to youth in Boston. Twelve organizations, including Massachusetts 2020 and the United Way of Massachusetts Bay, joined together to launch Boston's After-School for All Partnership. It is the largest public-private partnership dedicated to children in the history of Boston (United Way Massachusetts Bay 2000).

In Denver, Colorado, Mile High United Way is partnering with the City of Denver and Denver Public Schools in a local Lights on After School Initiative, designed to develop awareness and funding for after school programs in the Denver area.

IX. CONCLUSION: BUILDING SKILLS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

The education system in the United States is at a critical crossroads. Education reform efforts are working to ensure that all children and youth have the core skills, such as math and reading, necessary to compete in the workforce. Meanwhile, the increasing complexity brought on by globalization, advances in technology, and the emerging international/multinational nature of business brings into sharp focus the need for building additional skills in order to equip our youth to compete in the 21st century workforce. These 21st century literacy skills include:

- Critical thinking
- Communication
- Problem solving
- Ability to work in a team
- Ability to adapt to change

(Partnership for 21st Century Skills 2003)

Research shows that after school programs across the country are playing a critical role in building those skills. Specifically, youth who attend after school programming score higher than their peers in the following 21st century literacy skills:

- Communication skills
- Decision-making skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Conflict-resolution skills
- Leadership skills
- Computer skills

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills is a public-private organization whose members include the AOL/Time Warner Foundation, Apple, Cable in the Classroom, Cisco, Dell, Microsoft, and the National Education Association. Said Terry Crane, partnership co-chair and vice president for education and family products at AOL, Inc., "The Partnership's leaders are calling on communities to take advantage of the window of opportunity provided by No Child Left Behind to put into place a long-term vision to better prepare students for the workforce and society of the 21st century. Our doctors don't treat patients using 19th century medicines, and our teachers shouldn't educate students using 19th century learning models. Today's students need to demonstrate knowledge of core subjects, such as reading, math, and science, but they also must learn additional skills, including critical thinking, decision making, problem solving and communication, and the ability to adapt to a changing world."

The public agrees. In a recent poll conducted by the AOL/Time Warner Foundation, 92 percent of respondents agreed that young people need different skills today than they did 10-20 years ago (After School Alliance 2003). This poll also shows that the public is worried that youth may not be learning many of these critical 21st century literacy skills during the school day. While 74 percent of those surveyed believed that youth were learning core skills, such as reading and math during the school day, less than 50 percent believed that youth were learning communication and problem-solving skills, and only a third believed that youth were learning critical thinking and the skills needed to apply their learning to real world contexts (After School Alliance 2003).

If, in fact, significant gaps exist between what traditional schools are equipped to provide in the way of core skills and the additional 21st century literacy skills needed for youth to be fully prepared to enter our workforce, the United States will be unable to maintain its edge in an increasingly competitive global market. After school programs across the country are increasingly filling the gap, producing results and acting as a complementary educational system in partnership with local schools—equipping our youth to compete in the 21st century.

From the significant public and private investment in after school programming to date, initial evaluations have demonstrated positive results in building these vital 21st century literacy skills. The keys to building on the successes are already underway. (See Table 6)



Table 6: Steps Policymakers Can Take to Support After School Programs in Building 21st Century Literacy Skills

Steps	Strategies
Ensuring continuity of quality across after school programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrating best practices in developing 21st century literacy skills • Developing common standards and metrics of quality • Supporting common evaluations and measuring common outcomes
Developing statewide networks for after school programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating policy advisory councils to develop comprehensive policies for after school programming • Fostering cooperation and communication between the public and private sectors
Ensuring continuity and sustainability of funding for after school programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating innovative public-private partnerships and funding ventures • Increasing state and local government initiatives for dedicated funding • Increasing private, philanthropic, multi-year investments

It is critical to build on the successes that have been achieved in order to provide all children and youth with access to after school programming and the skills they need to be successful in school, in their communities, and in the workforce of the 21st century.

Continuing the public and private emphasis on ensuring quality after school programs for all youth who need them is essential to maintaining the momentum that has thus far been achieved with after school programs.

REFERENCES

- After School Alliance (2000). After School Alert Poll Report. Mott Foundation/J.C. Penney. www.afterschoolalliance.org.
- After School Alliance. (2003). Americans Think Young People Are not Adequately Prepared for 21st Century Success, Poll Finds; After School Programs Seen as Opportunity. www.afterschoolalliance.org.
- Beckett, M., Hawken, A., Jacknowitz, A. (2001). Accountability for After School Care: Devising Standards and Measuring Adherence to Them. RAND Corporation. www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1411/.
- Brown, W., Frates, S., Rudge, I., and Tradewell, R. (2002) The Costs and Benefits of After School Programs: The Estimated Effects of the After School Education and Safety Program Act of 2002. Claremont, CA: Rose Institute. www.rose.claremontmckenna.edu/publications/pdf/after_school.pdf.
- Catalano, R.F., Berglund, M., Ryan, J., Lonczak, H., and Hawkins, J. (1999). Positive Youth Development in the United States: Research Findings on Evaluations of Positive Youth Development Programs. Social Development Research Group. Seattle: University of Washington.
- Colorado Department of Education. (2003). CSAP scores. www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/datarequest.asp.
- Colorado Department of Health and Human Services. Child Care Facility Licensing 12 CCR 2509-8. [www.cdhs.state.co.us:8008/CDHS/rule_display\\$.DisplayVolume?p_vol_num=7700](http://www.cdhs.state.co.us:8008/CDHS/rule_display$.DisplayVolume?p_vol_num=7700).
- Elling, D. (2003). Statewide Networks Shape the Future of After School. Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. www.publicengagement.com/afterschoolnetworks/mosaicv3n1_poverty.pdf
- Fashola, O. (1998). Review of Extended-Day and After School Programs and Their Effectiveness 24. Johns Hopkins University. www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/techReports/Report24.pdf.
- Gentry, J. and M. Campbell. (2002). Developing Adolescence: A Reference for Professionals. Washington DC: American Psychological Association.
- Harvard Family Research Project. (2003). A review of out-of-school time quasi-experimental and experimental evaluation results. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University. www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/content/projects/afterschool/resources/snapshot1.pdf.
- Hollister, R. (2003). The Growth in After School Programs and Their Impact. The Brookings Institute. www.brookings.edu/views/papers/sawhill/20030225.htm.

Huang, D., Gribbons, B., Sung Kim, K., Lee, C., and Baker, E. (2000). A Decade of Results: The Impact of L.A.'s BEST After School Enrichment Program on Subsequent Student Achievement and Performance. Los Angeles: UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation. www.lasbest.org/learn/uclaeval.pdf.

Kane, T. (2004). The Impact of After School Programs: Interpreting the Results of Four Recent Evaluations. Working Paper of the William T. Grant Foundation. www.wtgrantfoundation.org/usr_doc/After-school_paper.pdf

Lerner, R.W., Fisher, C.B. and Weinberg, R.A. (2000). Toward a Science for and of the People: Promoting Civil Society through the Application of Developmental Science. *Child Development* 71: 11-20.

Liptrap, J. (1999) Chess and Standardized Test Scores. *Chess Coach Newsletter* 11(Spring): 5-7.

Mehesy, C. (2003). *Cultural Competency: The Role of After School Programs in Supporting Diverse Youth*. Denver, CO: Colorado Foundation for Families and Children.

National Council of Mayors. (2004) Resolutions adopted in 2004. www.usmayors.org/72ndAnnualMeeting/AdoptedResolutions04.pdf

Partnership for the 21st Century. (2003). Business and Education Leaders Articulate Vision for 21st Century Learning: Report Offers Recommendation and Tools to Prepare Students for Real World. Seattle: Partnership for the 21st Century.

Posner, J.K. and Vandell, D. (1994). Low-income children's after school care: Are there beneficial effects of after school programs? *Child Development*. 65(2).

Quinn, J. (1999) Where Need Meets Opportunity: Youth Development Programs for Early Teens. *The Future of Children*. 9(2).

Roth, J. and Brooks-Gunn, J. (2000). What Do Adolescents Need for Healthy Development? Implications for Youth Policy. *Social Policy Report*. XIV(1).

United Way Massachusetts Bay. (2001). Senate Budget Plan Adopts Statewide After School Campaign Proposal. www.uwmb.org/news/01kkotmass2020.htm.

U.S. Department of Education and Justice. (2000). Working Children and Families: Safe and Smart After School Programs. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education and Justice.



**COLORADO FOUNDATION FOR
FAMILIES AND CHILDREN**

IMPROVING PROGRAMS THAT IMPACT FAMILIES

**303 East 17th Avenue, Suite 400
Denver, CO 80203**

WWW.COLORADOFOUNDATION.ORG