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### New Reports Examine Access to Out-Of-School Time Programs

by Lane Russell

Introduction

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## New Reports Examine Access to Out-Of-School Time Programs

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Sustained participation in out-of-school time (OST) activities, research suggests, can improve a young person's academic achievement and success in life. Many municipal leaders also recognize that promoting participation in high-quality OST programs can advance other city priorities — including decreasing dropout rates, lowering juvenile crime rates and strengthening workforce development.

However, ensuring that youth have access to quality programming before school, after school and during the summer is often challenging. Two new reports funded by The Wallace Foundation examine challenges in expanding OST opportunities: lack of adequate summer programming and strategies for ensuring participation among older youth. A third report provides an in-depth analysis of the Providence AfterZones model, one promising example of a comprehensive, citywide afterschool system.

#### High Demand for Summer Learning Opportunities

The "Special Report on Summer: Missed Opportunities, Unmet Demand," by the Afterschool Alliance with support from The Wallace Foundation, offers a snapshot of how young people spend the summer months. The report found that only 25 percent of school-aged children participate in summer learning programs, but the demand for such programs among parents was significantly higher.

High-quality summer programming is key to preventing summer learning loss — that is, the decline in skills and knowledge that can take place during the summer months, and disproportionately affects minority and low-income students. This week's TIME cover story entitled, "The Case Against Summer Vacation," by David Von Drehle discusses the importance of summer programs to counteract the learning loss that can take place when students are not in school.

Recognizing the value of summer programming to keep youth learning and developing when they are not in school, this year San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom worked with the city's Recreation and Park Department to nearly triple the number of summer program slots, even as the city grapples with a budget deficit.

#### Engaging Older Youth in Out-of-School Time

Many cities are looking at innovative ways to ensure middle and high school-aged youth are engaged in OST programs year-round. These efforts reflect a growing understanding that OST opportunities are important not just for elementary school-aged youth, but can also be critical to helping older youth transition to high school and college, and preparing them with skills to enter the workforce.

A six-city study examines how high-quality OST programs in Chicago; Cincinnati, Ohio; New York City; Providence, R.I.; San Francisco; and Washington, D.C., recruit and retain middle and high school-aged youth in OST programs. The report, entitled "Engaging Older Youth: Program and City Level Strategies to Support Sustained Participation in Out-of-School Time," offers a set of recommendations that may help city leaders, funders and others improve access and participation in OST programs.

Findings for policymakers include: consider offering a variety of specialized activities for high school youth; engage family to increase participation; support school-program partnerships for recruitment efforts; and promote data-based decisions that can improve participation.

#### Providence AfterZones: A Citywide Afterschool System

The Providence, R.I., AfterZone model is a unique, citywide approach for offering high-quality OST learning opportunities to middle school students at "neighborhood campuses." Coordinated by the Providence After School Alliance (PASA) — which was formed by Mayor David Cicilline — this highly effective initiative allows youth to travel to programs in a geographic area (including schools, libraries, recreation centers, art centers and community organizations). The combination of resources across the community, with close to 100 providers working together, makes programs easily accessible to youth.

The Wallace Foundation's "AfterZones: Creating a Citywide System to Support and Sustain High-Quality After-School Programs" report discusses notable successes and challenges related to Providence's efforts to build citywide afterschool programming — including the strong support of Mayor Cicilline, who uses his bully pulpit to convene key stakeholders and leverage financial support from city departments, the school district, and the philanthropic community.

Other cities, including Nashville, Tenn., have engaged in efforts to replicate the Providence model. The Nashville Afterschool Zone Alliance (NAZA) launched its first zone in January 2010, with plans to launch a second zone in 2011. In just the first few months of operations in the first pilot zone, the number of middle school students in structured afterschool programs more than doubled.

**Details:** To access the three reports mentioned in this article, visit [www.wallacefoundation.org](http://www.wallacefoundation.org). For more information on NLC's afterschool initiatives, visit [www.nlc.org/lyef](http://www.nlc.org/lyef) or contact Lane Russell at (202) 626-3008 or [russell@nlc.org](mailto:russell@nlc.org), or Bela Shah Spooner at (202) 626-3057 or [shah@nlc.org](mailto:shah@nlc.org).

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