

A NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR QUALITY AFTERSCHOOL LEARNING



PRODUCT *highlight*

AFTERSCHOOL TRAINING TOOLKIT FOR THE ARTS

www.sedl.org/afterschool/toolkits/art/

This free online staff development resource includes video clips, research-based resources, and lesson plans on promising practices in the arts.



FORE *word*

Welcome to the first issue of *AfterWords*, the newsletter of the National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning.

If you're reading this newsletter, you already know that afterschool education is playing an increasingly important role in children's lives. Three years ago, the National Partnership was created to identify afterschool programs that showed a positive effect on student achievement. As our research continues, we are working with afterschool professionals to continue to improve student performance.

Through our research, we have visited an array of afterschool program sites. We have seen both urban and rural sites; we have observed programs run by community organizations like the Boys and Girls Club or the YMCA and those that are run by schools themselves. Some programs target a specific academic area, while others provide more general academic enrichment.

In spite of this variety, we know that high-quality programs share many characteristics. They have clear goals, align the program to meet these goals, and conduct evaluations to determine if they are successful. These programs foster strong relationships with day-school teachers. They allow students to work both independently and in groups, creating an environment that maintains student engagement and offers opportunities for social development. Finally, these programs employ qualified staff who participate in effective professional development.¹

With this newsletter, we hope to share what the National Partnership has learned about high-quality afterschool programs through our research. We also want to use this publication as a forum for the discussion of the issues afterschool professionals face and the successes they experience.

We hope you enjoy *AfterWords* and welcome your feedback.

¹ Huang, D. (2006, May). Preliminary findings from promising practices site identification for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers. *SEDL Letter*, 18(1), 9-14.



"Afterschool programs need a strong connection to the learning objectives of the school day to successfully increase student achievement."

CATHERINE JORDAN
project director

The National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning helps state education agencies and local practitioners develop high-quality programs for academic enrichment as well as youth development activities.



"The need for a safe center in the community was crucial for providing alternatives for the youth and families in the community."

MARISSA REYES

Urban Gateways: Center for Arts Education

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

A successful partnership with a community organization can play an important role in an afterschool program. Just ask associate program director Marissa Reyes of Urban Gateways (UG), a nonprofit that plans and directs arts programs in the Chicago area. UG works with six Chicago-area community schools to organize afterschool arts activities such as mural painting, mosaics, theater, percussion, hip-hop dance, ballet folklorico, Web page design, and photography.

Recently, UG collaborated with Chavez Multicultural Academic Center to hold a street festival at the end of the afterschool program's first year. Chavez is in a neighborhood with high poverty and crime rates. Activities at the festival included "make and take" art projects, student performances, meetings with community service providers, and a taco sale fundraiser held by the Parent Committee.

"The need for a safe center in the community was crucial for providing alternatives for the youth and families in the community," Reyes says. "The event was an unqualified success, serving to highlight the Chavez-UG partnership and promoting our program offerings so that the following year, participation in most classes was nearly at capacity."

Reyes attributes the successful partnership between schools and the nonprofit to the fact that UG and afterschool staff work together in several capacities. "Although UG is primarily an arts education organization, the partnership works to ensure that all programs are held to high academic standards and that all address youth development goals," she says.

IN YOUR words

We want to hear from you! The beginning of our newsletter also marks the beginning of our afterschool survey.

This Month's Question

What creative ways have you found to use technology with the students in your afterschool program?

Send your answers to afterwords@sedl.org.

Please put "January Survey" in the subject line of the e-mail, and let us know if we can use your name in the survey.

TRAINING tip



Research shows that high-quality afterschool programs have strong ties with the day school. A program director can facilitate these ties by having afterschool staff who are not day-school teachers spend the last 30 minutes of the school day helping teachers in their classrooms hand out homework assignments and prepare students for dismissal. They can then accompany the students to the afterschool program. In addition to fostering a stronger rapport, afterschool staff and day-school teachers will have the opportunity to briefly discuss student progress.

EVENTS calendar

- Feb 22-23 PEAK Afterschool Event: Math and Science
KANSAS CITY, MO
- March 8-9 PEAK Afterschool Event: Literacy and Arts
WHEELING, IL
- March 20-23 National Afterschool Association
Annual Conference
PHOENIX, AZ

For more events, visit our calendar at www.sedl.org/afterschool/training/calendar.html.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Registration for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers 2007 Summer Institute is now open. Proposals for conference presentations are also being accepted. The Summer Institute will take place in Miami, Florida, July 17-19. For more information, go to www.sei2003.com/21stcentury/.

Editor: Laura Shankland
Designer: Shaila Abdullah

Copyright © 2007 by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. This newsletter was produced in whole or in part with funds from the U.S. Department of Education under contract number ED-01-CO-0057/0001.