

A NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR QUALITY AFTERSCHOOL LEARNING



FEATURED resources

FINDING RESOURCES TO SUPPORT RURAL OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME INITIATIVES

www.financeprojectinfo.org/Publications/ruralost.pdf

THRIVING TOGETHER: CONNECTING RURAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

www.sedl.org/pubs/fam95/160.html

STRENGTHENING LOCAL EVALUATION CAPACITY IN RURAL COMMUNITIES. THE EVALUATION EXCHANGE: EMERGING STRATEGIES IN EVALUATING CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES VI(1).

www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/eval/issue15/evalex15.pdf

AFTERSCHOOL news



Afterschool Programs in Rural Areas: A Conversation With Claudette Morton

"I'd rather live on the side of a mountain than wander through canyons of concrete and steel," sang John Denver in 1973. Years later, many families share Denver's preference for country life over city living. In 2003, some 25% of public school students lived in communities of 25,000 or less, or what we would consider rural areas.¹

To learn more about afterschool programs in rural areas, we talked to Claudette Morton, a member of the National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning's steering committee. Morton was recently recognized as one of *Edutopia* magazine's "daring dozen" for her efforts to improve education in rural areas. Her experience with afterschool began early in her career with a job at an afterschool program with the Parks and Recreation program in Billings, Montana. Today, Morton is the executive director of the Montana Small Schools Alliance.

Morton encourages rural afterschool programs to play to their strengths to meet the unique challenges they face, such as geographic isolation. One of the advantages of living in a small town is that you really do know everyone. While you might not be able to go to Home Depot or other national chains for partnerships or donations, you can talk to the owners of the local stockyard or grain elevator. Chances are they know you—and your students—and will be happy to help out.

Many rural afterschool programs are also able to tap into existing programs for resources. This includes paying certified teachers to work an additional few hours in afterschool and partnering with organizations like 4-H, a youth organization that includes agriculture education and activities in its programming. Indeed, two of the most important strategies that Morton suggests are ones that high-performing afterschool programs, both rural and urban, use: working with the regular day school and developing strong community ties.

¹ National Center for Education Statistics. (2003.) Table 6: Number of public school students, by locale code (CCD) and state (fall 2003). Retrieved June 15, 2007, from <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/RuralEd/TablesHTML/6localestudents.asp>



"We might be farther apart and have fewer people, but we still have the same goals for our students. We want them to have the necessary skills to succeed in the 21st century. Sometimes we do things differently to reach those goals."

CLAUDETTE MORTON

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.

Newsletter available online at www.sedl.org/afterschool/afterwords/

www.sedl.org/afterschool/



Kid Zone and BLAST (Best Learning After School Time)

KEOKUK, IOWA

At the 21st Century Community Learning Center afterschool program in Keokuk, Iowa, relationships—both between the program and the community and between staff and students—play an important role in its success. The program faces the challenges of maintaining financial sustainability in an economically depressed area, finding qualified and dedicated employees, and providing transportation in this rural area.

According to Jackie Scott, the program's lead coordinator, good relationships begin with the hiring of high-quality staff. "Through our interview process and screening, we strive to ensure that all of our sites are well managed and employ sound fiscal practices," she says. They also try to recruit staff who want careers in education or have previous childcare experience.

One-on-one or small-group tutoring and homework help allow students and staff to get to know each other. Enrichment clubs such as sewing, crocheting, Legos, and K'nex allow students to learn and also offer a natural setting for students and staff to work together. "These positive connections help students learn in ways that a teacher's best lesson plan or textbook can never replicate," says Scott.

"Having varied experiences with adults helps these students see practical benefits of education and inspires them to think about future goals."

JACKIE SCOTT
program lead coordinator

IN YOUR *words*

**How are you spending your summer months?
(Select all that apply.)**

- Writing grant applications
- Developing curriculum
- Attending conferences and training
- Catching up on sleep and reading a fun novel

To participate in this survey and view results, submit your vote at www.sedl.org/afterschool/afterwords/survey200707.html.

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NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR QUALITY AFTERSCHOOL LEARNING

at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory

SEDL

TECHNOLOGY *tip*

Technology in Rural Areas

Getting technology into the classroom is another challenge in rural areas. Again, Claudette Morton suggests that afterschool programs look to their communities for help. She has helped a number of schools and afterschool programs make computers available to students by going to local businesses, like banks and government agencies, and asking them to donate used computers.



Do you have a training tip you would like to share? E-mail us at afterwords@sedl.org with "training tip" in the subject line.

EVENTS *calendar*

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| Oct. 20 | The Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence
2007 Afterschool Conference
MESA, AZ |
| Oct. 22–23 | The Bridge from School to Afterschool and Back: Northwest Regional Training Event
VANCOUVER, WA |
| Nov. 2–3 | The Creative Spirit of Afterschool:
The New Jersey School-Age Care Coalition Annual Conference
PRINCETON, NJ |

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