



Learning Recovery Talking Points developed by Afterschool Alliance March 2021

- We need to bring together all the resources in our communities to provide a robust support system for students and their families.
 - After almost a full year of the pandemic, we cannot and should not expect our school buildings and our teachers alone to meet our students where they are and help them succeed.
 - Throughout the pandemic, afterschool and summer providers have pivoted their services to meet the needs of millions of kids and families nationwide. We are engaging new partners and working around-the-clock to support youth and families, wherever and whenever it's needed.
 - Afterschool and summer providers stand ready to provide the expanded support kids and families need to emerge from this crisis strong, resilient, and hopeful.

When talking with SEA and LEAs

- We want to help you achieve your goals for students' recovery and would love to hear about your priorities so we can best support you.
- Community partners stand ready to leverage these funds to provide high-quality interventions for our kids.
- Federal funding from the American Rescue Plan includes Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (**ESSER**) III Funds for learning recovery, including afterschool and summer enrichment programs
 - If you are talking to state education agencies:
State Education Agencies have
 - 1% set aside that must be spent on afterschool (\$11 Million)
 - 1% set aside that must be spent on summer enrichment (\$11 Million)
 - 5% that must be spent on learning recovery strategies, including comprehensive afterschool programs and summer learning programs. (\$58 Million)
 - If you are talking to local education leaders: (see [Talking points and sample letter for LEAs](#))
Local Education Agencies are to spend at least 20% of their ESSER III funds (\$209.9 million) on strategies to promote learning recovery including comprehensive afterschool programs and summer learning or enrichment programs.
- But right now many programs are in crisis financially. If we want to meet the needs of our students, we need more programs, and stronger support for existing providers.
- 87% of programs are concerned about their program's long-term funding and future as a result of COVID-19, according to a fall 2020 survey of the afterschool field conducted by the Afterschool Alliance.

What students need this summer

- The pandemic has taken a serious toll on students, causing significant learning loss, social isolation, stress and trauma.
- Students need to feel safe and supported to re-engage in learning and recover from this period of loss and isolation. This summer, kids of all ages need new ways and places to learn.
- Students need not only academic support, but also social and emotional support. They need help sustaining and rebuilding relationships, talking about their experiences and emotions, developing as leaders and agents of change, and re-engaging with their interests.
- They need a summer that includes time with friends and mentors, opportunities for creative enrichment and expression, healthy meals, safe outdoor physical activities, and fun engaging projects that allow them to explore and create without stress.

Summer learning (afterschool, expanded learning) programs are more important than ever

- Now more than ever, summer learning programs have the power to be a game changer for everyone.
- Across the country, summer programs are adapting and innovating to ensure children and their families can access safe, high-quality summer learning opportunities, supports and services that are essential for recovery. These programs are uniquely positioned to provide kids with enriching academics, social-emotional support, caring mentors and trained educators, healthy meals, physical activities, and opportunities to explore careers and gain workforce skills.
- Summer and afterschool programs are proven to accelerate learning gains. Research proves that high-quality summer and afterschool programs improve students' reading and math skills. Programs also are effective at increasing students' school attendance, course credits, and on-time graduation.
- Afterschool and summer programs provide a safe place where professional educators connect with kids, engage them in hands-on learning, help them navigate challenges, and talk about how to make good decisions.
- Staff are trained to focus on the whole child and offer enriching activities that encourage young people to try new things, build confidence, and develop social skills.
- Summer learning programs can play a critical role in keeping kids safe, healthy and active.
- Many summer programs provide students with access to nutritious meals, which is especially critical as the pandemic has caused increases in hunger and food insecurity.
- Summer learning programs provide vital opportunities for kids of all ages to take part in fun, engaging experiences that allow them to connect with nature, play, enjoy physical activities, and explore their community's parks and outdoor spaces.

Expanding opportunities for youth to explore careers and gain workforce skills

- Summer programs create new learning opportunities for youth, including internships, summer jobs, and service and volunteer programs.
- Through the supportive policies and support of business leaders and community leaders, America's youth and young adults – especially from underserved communities – can learn, gain real world experience, contribute to their community and economy, and experience safer environments through their summer jobs, internships (paid or unpaid), and/or volunteering opportunities

Expanding access to ensure an equitable recovery

- Summer learning and afterschool programs operate at the nexus of schools, families and communities to expand learning opportunities and provide essential support for millions of kids that otherwise would not be available.
- These programs have deep reach in places that have been hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and the related economic downturn, including low-income communities, communities of color and rural areas.
- Because they're rooted in local partnerships, summer and afterschool programs are able to leverage resources and space from libraries, parks, museums, churches, businesses and other community organizations. These programs make good use of buildings and playgrounds during the summer months, outside of school hours and while parents are working.
- Programs provide underserved youth with new learning opportunities, healthy food, safe places for physical activity, and mentors who help them build the skills they need to thrive in school and life. Many partner with schools, churches, and other local organizations to offer services for free, including daily snacks and suppers, and connect families with health care, employment, and other resources.
- But access is not equitable.
 - Among low-income communities and communities of color, barriers such as cost and access prevent many students from participating, while higher income families report higher participation and spend 5x more on out-of-school activities. New data shows unmet demand for afterschool is highest among Black and Latinx communities.
 - The gaps in opportunity that already disadvantage students from low-income families are likely to grow, with many more families struggling from job losses and fallout from the pandemic.
- As we recover and rebuild, afterschool and summer programs are a critical investment for helping kids catch up on the learning they've lost—and keeping them safe, supported and engaged so they can reach their full potential.

Rising to the moment, meeting the needs of kids and families

Throughout the pandemic, here's how programs have stepped up and the supports they continue to provide:

- Safe, enriching activities for children of working parents, first responders or essential workers, in some cases operating full-day resource centers
- Support for remote learning, including help with school-work and hands-on activities that complement school lessons
- Food support, including grab-and-go meals, groceries or meal delivery
- Virtual programming to stay connected with kids and keep them engaged and learning while they're home
- Resources to help families access food assistance, unemployment, healthcare and more
 - Research overview: http://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/What_Does_the_Research_Say_About_Afterschool.pdf
 - [Afterschool & Students Recovery fact sheet](#) (Jan 2021)

Parents value the learning, social, and skill building opportunities provided by out-of-school time programs, and want more such opportunities for their children.

- Before the pandemic, unmet demand for afterschool had soared to the highest level yet -- and we expect that demand to be even greater as families return to work, and seek opportunities to support their children's learning and social engagement.
- In 2020 in Colorado,
 - For every child in a program there are 5 are waiting to get in

- 398,230 kids would participate in an afterschool program if one were available to them.
- 145,009 kids were alone and unsupervised between the hours of 3Pm and 6PM
- Colorado parents give program high marks, with 92% satisfied with their child's program. (insert your own state data from [AA3PM/data/Colorado/overview](https://www.afterschoolalliance.org/data/Colorado/overview))
 - Parents agree that programs provide kids opportunities to learn life skills like the ability to communicate and work in teams, while keeping kids safe and out of trouble
 - Parents value programs for the opportunities to interact with peers and build social skills, get help with homework, and be active.
 - Parents with a child in an afterschool program agree afterschool programs help them keep their job, and during the pandemic, with unemployment soaring, programs give them needed time to seek a new job.
 - Community partners stand ready to leverage these funds to provide high-quality interventions for our kids.
 - But right now many programs are in crisis financially. If we want to meet the needs of our students, we need more programs, and stronger support for existing providers.
 - 87% of programs are concerned about their program's long-term funding and future as a result of COVID-19, according to a fall 2020 survey of the afterschool field conducted by the Afterschool Alliance.

Extended Day

- We are concerned about proposals to extend the school day. This has been done before and there were reports of teacher and student exhaustion.
- It is exactly right to be thinking about more learning time, but this time can be used to bring in a host of other community organizations, resources and a second set of educators, to supplement learning and help individualize it around students' strengths, passions and challenges rather than a purely academic focus.
- Consider the recommendation explained here that outlines successful expanded learning initiative: www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Expanded-Learning-Reopening-Schools.pdf