

Welcome

This issue of *Afterschool Matters* offers us some helpful direction to understanding persistent questions in our field—such as “What do high quality out-of-school-time programs actually *do* to yield good outcomes?”—while also challenging us to

consider the nuance of language and how we talk about our profession. There is also a wonderful blending of authors in this volume representing the fields of sociology, public health, human development and family studies, and education.

Having recently returned from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Summer Institute, I am struck by the vastness of the experience and passion in our field for working with and supporting the healthy development of children and youth. Yet there are many corners of the field we are continuing to explore and better understand, so as to make the most informed decisions on program improvement, utilization of resources, and assessment strategies.

In “How Is the Afterschool Field Defining Program Quality,” Palmer, Anderson, and Sabatelli review empirical evidence regarding the characteristics of effective programs and the field’s emerging consensus regarding program quality. We recognize that not all programs can yield positive outcomes—so it is imperative to understand more about those that do. Galloway and Shea, in “Does Your Organization Welcome Participants with Disabilities?” push us to consider how we are supporting and serving children with special needs in afterschool programs. Adapting an existing research instrument, they examine the extent to which programs truly welcome children and youth with disabilities. In our third article, Nelson provides insight into Latina/o youth experience in afterschool programs and subsequent impact on college pathways. While it is a small exploratory study, “The Differential Role of Youth Development Program Participation for Latina/o Adolescents” offers some unique methodological choices and rich qualitative analysis.

Our last article comes via our colleagues at the Out-of-School Time Resource Center (OSTRC) at the University of Pennsylvania. In “Defining Our Terms: Professional Development in Out-of-School Time” Peter draws attention to our lack of clear terminology and communication in the field around the topic of professional development. We hope that this article can be a springboard to a national conversation and the sharpening of our professional dialogue.

NIOST is very cognizant of the need to also engage youth voice and words. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to interview one of the teen girls participating in the Row New York youth development program, which is captured in the final piece of this journal. Her comments marvelously illuminate how enjoyable facilitated out-of-school time experiences can be, while also supporting development of valuable assets such as time management, motivation, and teamwork. I encourage you to visit Flushing Meadow Park and take a look in Meadow Lake, and you will see some enriching out-of-school time experiences for older youth in action.



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