

Welcome

As we get ready to go to press with this issue of *Afterschool Matters*, schools in Massachusetts are opening and first-year Wellesley College students are arriving. In sharing the excitement of getting a new school year underway, inevitably we ask the question, “What did you do this summer?”

Recent papers by Child Trends, “Effective and Promising Summer Learning Programs and Approaches for Economically-Disadvantaged Children and Youth”; by Afterschool Alliance, “Special Report on Summer: Missed Opportunities, Unmet Demand”; and by David Von Drehle, “The Case Against Summer Vacation” call into question longstanding notions of summer vacations spent mindlessly on the beach, at the playground, or in the neighborhood. Significant research on school achievement has identified the academic risk of summers devoid of meaningful learning experiences, particularly for low-resourced children and families.

Based on a review of experimental studies, researchers at Child Trends (Terzian, Anderson, & Hamilton, 2010) recommend seven practices of effective programs. Practices shared by programs that showed positive impact on student outcomes included:

- Make learning fun
- Ground learning in a real-world context
- Integrate hands-on activities
- Provide content that complements curricular standards
- Hire experienced, trained teachers to deliver the academic lessons
- Keep class sizes small

I think you will find that this issue of *Afterschool Matters* jumpstarts the conversation for these fundamental practices—understanding engagement and retention, keeping staff dedicated and trained, meeting needs for quantity and quality of programming, and hands-on learning. We are also highly aware that federal commitment and support for OST programs through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program will be in debate when our legislators return to Washington in mid-September.

We continue to learn more about the role of summer learning and its long-term impact on school achievement. Camping, community-based, and youth-serving organizations are intensely working to strengthen their connections to academic skill building while continuing to provide enriching, fun, and engaging life experiences for youth. We hope this issue of *Afterschool Matters* will help inspire our learning community of OST professionals to more effective service—and as author Lisa Sweet Dilles suggests, “the best of both worlds.”



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Work Cited: Terzian, M., Moore, K. A., & Hamilton, K. (2010). *Effective and promising summer learning programs and approaches for economically-disadvantaged children and youth: A white paper for the Wallace Foundation*. Washington, DC: Child Trends.

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Afterschool Matters is a national, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to promoting professionalism, scholarship, and consciousness in the field of afterschool education. Published by the Robert Bowne Foundation and the National Institute on Out-of-School Time, the journal serves those involved in developing and running programs for youth during the out-of-school hours, in addition to those engaged in research and shaping policy. For information on *Afterschool Matters* and the Afterschool Matters Initiative, contact

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