

WELCOME

Which ball drops faster from the Leaning Tower of Pisa? In what kind of soil do green beans grow taller? Does adding sugar to a vase of flowers delay wilting? Ask a second-grader! I did, at a recent science fair, and was reminded of the excitement children and youth can experience when they take on the role of scientist, experimenter, inventor—and expert.

We are most grateful to the Noyce Foundation for supporting this issue of *Afterschool Matters* focused on STEM in out-of-school time (OST) settings. Lifting up the ongoing contribution of OST programs to STEM learning is an important exercise for the field. Dimensions of STEM learning such as investigating, reasoning, analyzing, concluding, and explaining can regularly be part of OST learning content. Enriching and engaging STEM learning experiences can build skills intimately related to school and career success.

Through various organizations and initiatives, the momentum for enhancing STEM learning in OST programs is growing. Recently the Afterschool Alliance produced the report “Defining Youth Outcomes for STEM Learning in Afterschool,” which helps to identify what STEM learning outcomes afterschool programs could help to achieve, what the indicators of progress toward such outcomes might be, and what types of evidence could be collected by afterschool programs.

We hope that this issue of *Afterschool Matters* pushes the conversation forward. Whether the subject is cryptology, biology, or March Madness bracketology, the OST program lab is open! We encourage all to come in.



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