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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 Georgia Hall, Senior Research Scientist, National Institute on Out-of-School Time, Wellesley Centers for Women, Wellesley College, 106 Central Street, Wellesley, MA 02481, [asmsubmission@wellesley.edu](mailto:asmsubmission@wellesley.edu)

## WELCOME

The mention of “habits of mind” in the first article in this issue of *Afterschool Matters*, “Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Core?,” reminds me of a backyard baseball game last summer. When my 30-something cousin stepped to the plate, the young players in the field all stepped back, shouting, “Justin’s up, move back.” With a big smile on his face, my cousin dropped his bat and walked to the pitcher’s mound where I stood. He told me that he had been waiting all his life for someone to say that.

It’s easy to grow up believing you are an easy out.

High-quality out-of-school time (OST) programs nurture attitudes and behaviors that lead to productive actions—the habits of mind Marten, Hill, and Lawrence describe. OST programs instill in children and youth positive messages about their lives, their selves, and their potential. These fundamental messages become part of who they are, how they describe themselves, and how they relate to others. Thus, OST programs build the habits of mind that enable young people to succeed through persistent effort and struggle.

The papers in this issue of *Afterschool Matters* reflect many of the vital messages young people are getting from OST programs:

- **You can learn and excel.** Sequencing activities in OST programming helps learners build knowledge in small steps so that everyone can learn, as shown in “Curriculum and Professional Development for OST Science Education.”
- **You can teach each other.** Peer leadership has a role in promoting youth wellness in “The Role of Out-of-School Time in Reducing Hunger and Preventing Obesity.”
- **Girls are natural scientists, too.** “Long-Term Participants” shows how an OST STEM program is changing the science learning trajectory for girls.
- **Boys can write, too.** “Writing Is Not Really Something I Do” shows how following children’s interests and inclinations helps them write more.
- **We will protect you.** “Keeping Children Safe” reminds us that children and youth need caring adults around them to shelter them from harm.
- **We know how to help you develop your potential.** OST program participants depend on having well-trained staff, as described in “Paper Copters and Potential.”

As these articles show, OST programs engage in many and varied aspects of academic and youth development. The OST program may be the only place in some children’s lives where they learn that they are valued and valuable. As we embark on this new program year, let’s make positive messaging one of our own habits as OST workers and leaders.



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