

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

THE CURRENT STATE OF AFTERSCHOOL IN GEORGIA: BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION



Why are Afterschool and Summer Opportunities in Georgia Important?

- Afterschool programs provide a safe and enriching space for kids to learn responsibility and grow outside of the traditional school setting.
- Afterschool is an essential avenue for addressing the problems and challenges facing our youth.
- Afterschool programming can also be a vital tool for improving academic outcomes for youth.
- Afterschool is an important opportunity that helps prepare our kids to live, learn and eventually work and earn in a global economy.

Good News for Georgia

Georgia already has many excellent afterschool programs and, as a state, has begun to develop an infrastructure to support quality afterschool programming. Through meetings and conversations facilitated by the Georgia Afterschool Investment Council (GAIC) partners have shared information and ideas; developed a unified vision for afterschool in the state; and begun building a coordinated approach to establish quality afterschool programs, as well as a system to support those programs and the children and families they serve.

Challenges Remain

Despite the good news, there is much work to be done to support the development of a vibrant menu of afterschool options throughout Georgia. Consider these facts presented in the report:

- In many counties, afterschool programs are limited and may not serve children and families who need them most.
- Quality varies widely across programs and without statewide afterschool standards, quality is difficult to assess.
- Funding is often hard to access and manage. A coordinated statewide funding effort could do much to increase financial support for afterschool programs.
- In order for afterschool program to thrive and meet growing demand, Georgia needs to build a statewide afterschool collaborative with resources and supports to enhance the work of afterschool programs throughout the state.

Afterschool Action Agenda for Georgia

It is clear from this report that many good things are happening in Georgia, but we still have a long way to go to develop a vibrant afterschool system and realize our vision of afterschool in the state. Below are several action steps that Georgia can take to build on our strong foundation:

- **Develop a comprehensive map of the afterschool programming and funding picture** since many gaps remain in our knowledge of what programs exist in Georgia, let alone their quality. Georgia could begin a full-scale data-gathering process by developing a comprehensive afterschool program map examining where programs are located, how they are funded, what needs and challenges they are designed to address, and where the gaps are in funding.
- **Build a comprehensive statewide afterschool collaborative** which will guide the development of quality standards based on accountability and be a support for afterschool. This process could include support for organizing, professional development for staff, database tracking and policy development.
- **Create afterschool standards for quality** informed by a state-based Afterschool Academies pilot which would be a multi-day, research-based professional development opportunity that promotes project-based learning techniques for afterschool and summer program staff.
- **Develop a funding agenda for afterschool** to identify which needs are not being met and how funding could be used to meet current and future needs.
- **Build an afterschool policy agenda** that addresses the needs of all of Georgia's children and families. It should especially address the challenges facing youth on the margins—those at risk of dropping out, becoming pregnant or simply falling behind their peers.

For copies of the report, please contact the Georgia Afterschool Investment Council.