Insert letterhead/logo

DATE (e.g. March 1st, 2017)

Superintendent Richard Woods

Georgia Department of Education

205 Jesse Hill Jr Dr., SE

Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Superintendent Woods,

Thank you for the inclusive process by which you are preparing the Georgia state draft plan under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). For decades, at the local level schools and school systems have worked with afterschool and summer providers to coordinate resources for youth. ESSA provides an opportunity to make these relationships more intentional, rewarding, and widespread by leveraging resources between community providers and the school system to improve student outcomes and success across Georgia.

Summaries from the listening sessions across the state and advisory groups show support for afterschool programming and engagement with the community to support school improvement, improve statewide assessments, and .support the development of the whole child. A few examples include feedback from:

Feel free to leave all the examples from the listening sessions and advisory groups below OR pick 2-4 bullets that you think make the strongest case for afterschool.

**Listening Sessions**

* Gordon County: Educators should ensure that all students have access to resources including technology, afterschool activities, field trips, mental health supports and regular physical education.
* Laurens County: Focus on fostering relationships with the public, providing students with opportunities to explore their interests, addressing student interests, providing mental health services, and increasing access to afterschool programs.
* Muscogee County: Increase opportunities and funding for social, emotional and physical activity for all students.

**Advisory Groups**

* Superintendent Group: Focus on supporting school improvement through expansion of government, non-profit, private, and business partnerships and implementing project-based learning within the community.
* Teacher Group: Schools should foster enrichment beyond the school day and connections between learning and real world applications of knowledge.
* Middle- and High-School Student Groups: Students should have more opportunities to engage in hands-on activities and community based learning that connect to real-world knowledge. Beyond state assessments, students should have other opportunities to show their learning such as art, projects, classroom tasks, and one-on-one interactions with teachers.
* Parent Group: Students should receive individualized instruction based on learning styles.

Research shows that well-attended, quality afterschool programs improve students’ attendance, academic performance, grade promotion, behavior, self-confidence, leadership skills, and school engagement. Afterschool and summer programs keep students safe and engaged from 3-6 p.m., when juvenile crime peaks, as well as during the summer months when the academic and achievement gaps between high- and low-income students widen without appropriate interventions.

*[Tell your story! We recommend that you keep your description between 80-150 words. Your story could include:*

* *The location of your program*
* *Description of who you serve (e.g. ages, demographics)*
* *People, parents, schools and community partners you’ve engaged*
* *Results you’ve seen*
* *A story of a particular student, parent, and/or family*
* *What more coordination or resources might allow you to do]*

An ESSA plan that leverages opportunities for school/afterschool partnerships and meets stakeholder demand would include:

* Ensuring all state and local needs assessments ask students and families about their access to and use of extra-curricular and expanded learning opportunities;
* Reporting on school and district report cards the percentage of a school’s students who participate in extra-curricular and expanded learning opportunities;
* Specifically listing afterschool programming as an evidence-based intervention that schools and districts can fund under Title I to improve student outcomes in attendance, academics, and behavior;
* Highlighting the use of Title IV Part A funds for coordination between school day and afterschool STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) resources and training; and
* Aligning professional development and technical assistance for 21st CCLC grantees to the Georgia Afterschool and Youth Development Quality Standards to ensure maximum impact.

The Georgia Draft ESSA plan provides the perfect opportunity to include the leveraged opportunities described above. My colleagues and I have seen the difference firsthand this would make for our children and their families, schools, and communities. We are happy that so many stakeholders in the listening sessions shared our views.

Please reach out to me with any questions. I look forward to seeing the draft plan and continuing to be a resource to your department and the state as the planning process continues.

[Your name], [Your title]

[Program/Organization name]