OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME (OST) MATTERS TO ALL FAMILIES

In November 2018, the Texas Board of Education released its new Long-Range Plan for Public Education. The plan calls for “all students [to] be served by effective schools that provide high-quality systems of support, both in school and out of school, which are monitored for effectiveness and designed to improve equitable outcomes for all students, especially those with the greatest needs.” This focus on out-of-school time (OST) is not surprising. While most middle-class students have access to safe and enriching activities between the hours of 3 and 6 pm, most low-income students do not. Even before COVID-19 forced the closure of so many programs, Dallas County only had enough free or low-cost afterschool seats to serve 17% of over 100,000 low-income students.

Research indicates that access makes little difference without rigorous quality standards. Of the 17,000 low-income students across Dallas County who could attend afterschool, nearly all of them attended programs run by non-profit agencies that, because they are free or low-cost to parents, are exempt from state licensing requirements. In other words, anyone can run an afterschool program out of their apartment, church, or anywhere else, regardless of their training or background. Such limitations on access and quality make it difficult for providers to truly bridge the opportunity gap for low-income students. Across Texas, the lack of access to quality afterschool programming has direct negative consequences for economic growth, academic success, food security, and public safety.

A comprehensive reference list for all data in this report is available here.
Due to COVID-19, nearly all time has become out-of-school time, increasing the opportunity and learning gap for low-income students and students of color. According to local data, Dallas students have experienced:

- 30% learning loss in reading,
- 50% learning loss in math,
- 45% fewer seats available in OST programs due to social distancing, and
- 30% fewer OST programs in operation due to permanent closures.

While more affluent families can afford tutors and private camps for their children, many families in Dallas have spent the pandemic sheltered in place without access to Internet or technology. Many youth have lost access not only to safe spaces, but to trusted peers, mentors, teachers, and pastors. As pillars of our local community, OST programs will be crucial to the post-pandemic recovery. If given the proper support, they can ensure all kids have access to the learning and enrichment opportunities they need to emerge from this crisis strong, resilient, and ready to thrive.
COVID-19 OST PROVIDER IMPACT

Throughout the pandemic, OST providers have quickly pivoted to serve the needs of youth and families:

- **73%** serve youth **remotely**.
- **62%** connect families to **community resources**.
- **57%** deliver **meals** to families.

Despite these efforts, COVID-19 continues to cause **stress** and **uncertainty** among OST providers:

- Nearly **9 in 10** are concerned about students’ mental health, learning loss, and missed opportunities for social connection.

- **38%** will have to raise parent fees or find new sources of revenue if the pandemic continues into fall of 2021.
- **87%** fear for the health and safety of their staff and youth.
- **84%** are unsure how to find and pay for PPE and other safety supplies and procedures.
COVID-19 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure the protection of staff and youth, programs need to make extra investments such as purchasing PPE and safety supplies as well as hiring additional staff to meet social distancing requirements and reduce student-teacher ratios.

The following recommendations will ensure resources go to the OST programs that working families and children depend on:

1. Allocate COVID-19 relief funds to OST providers.
2. Prioritize COVID-19 testing and vaccinations for OST front-line staff.
3. Encourage government entities to coordinate with Internet Service Providers to provide uniformly affordable, reliable and accessible connectivity solutions on behalf of school districts and charters that serve rural and/or low-income students.
4. Revise FCC rules to increase flexibility for allowable E-Rate fund usage to increase access and available support for underserved communities. The E-Rate program is currently available to help schools and libraries obtain affordable broadband.
WHY AFTERSCHOOL MATTERS

ECONOMIC GROWTH

18% of unemployed parents list childcare as their primary reason for not working and 42% place it among the top five reasons.

NO CHILDCARE = NO EMPLOYMENT

Businesses lose up to $300 billion annually due to decreased worker productivity related to parental concerns about afterschool care.

Parents miss an average of eight days of work per year due to a lack of afterschool care.

Afterschool programs are a lifeline for working families. In Dallas, 89% of parents with a child in an afterschool program agree that the program helps them keep their job or work more hours.

- Jodi Grant, Executive Director
   The Afterschool Alliance

PUBLIC SAFETY

The hours between 3 and 6 pm are the peak hours for juvenile crime and experimentation with drugs, sex, cigarettes, and alcohol.

83% of low-income parents believe that access to afterschool will reduce the likelihood of risky behaviors among students.
ACADEMIC SUCCESS

In Dallas and elsewhere, low-income students in high quality afterschool programs outperform their peers on state standardized tests in math and reading.

1ST AND 2ND GRADE STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES

SEL and afterschool are a perfect match. Students in programs with intentional SEL programming improve their social and emotional skills.

Afterschool allows kids to learn SEL skills in a fun, engaging way.

SEL-focused training helps afterschool providers become strong role models and mentors.

By the sixth grade, low-income students have averaged 6,000 fewer hours of enrichment activities compared to middle-income students, with 70% attributable to lost afterschool and summer opportunities.

75% of low-income families report that their afterschool program provides access to snacks and meals.

In Dallas County alone, afterschool provides 3.8 million meals to children annually.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)

In Dallas and elsewhere, early learners in high-quality afterschool programs have greater literacy gains compared to students not in high-quality programs.

Food Security

Through Dallas Afterschool’s literacy efforts, 90% of students who received specific summer literacy support in 2019 did not experience summer learning loss.
STATE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Publicly display all afterschool and summer programs so parents can understand the range of options available for students.

Texas Health and Human Services (HHS) provides an online resource where parents can find all licensed OST facilities in their community. At the same time, many situations exist that allow OST providers to receive a licensing exemption. Educational facilities approved by TEA, emergency shelters, and free or extremely low-cost programs run by nonprofit organizations can all receive official exemption. These unlicensed programs provide vital services for working and low-income parents, but are not listed on the HHS website, meaning parents may not understand the range of options available to them.

2. Require TEA and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to publish all campus-based expanded learning opportunities in the District at a Glance Summary reports and as a set of specific reports on the online Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) platform.

In the 85th Legislative Session state lawmakers passed SB1404, which requires school districts and charter schools to use the PEIMS platform to report all expanded learning opportunities and attendance on each campus. The 2020-2021 Academic Year is the first year for collection of this data, which, if made publicly available, could serve as a critical source of information to help parents understand the OST opportunities available on their children’s campuses.

3. Support the formation of a task force to define a research-based, state-wide standard for quality OST programming so parents can make informed decisions when choosing where to send their children.

In Dallas County alone, it is estimated that one third of all afterschool participants attend an unlicensed program. Even for programs that have licenses, levels of quality vary significantly. Research shows that quality programming improves children’s academic success, school attendance, and disciplinary records. For programs to have this impact, however, they must include what researchers call “focused, intentional activities with appropriate structure and supervision.” Without a state-wide understanding of quality, there is no way to guarantee that OST programs will truly improve student outcomes in school and in life. The proposed task force should include OST professionals, parents, and youth development experts.
STATE RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTINUED)

4. **Incorporate racial equity and consideration of historical access to funding when evaluating and awarding grants through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program.**

The only federal funding dedicated exclusively to supporting local OST programs is the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. In Texas, this program is called Texas Afterschool Centers on Education, or Texas ACE, and its funding stream is managed by TEA and distributed through a competitive grant process. Currently, Texas ACE supports OST programs serving more than 100,000 students in over 400 communities. Although funds are restricted to Title I school districts, there is currently no explicit consideration of racial equity or historically under-resourced communities in the review process, despite the fact that students of color have worse academic outcomes and less access to quality OST programs compared to white students.

In Texas, there is significant **bipartisan support** for greater investment in afterschool.

- **91%** Democrats
- **81%** Independents
- **84%** Republicans

*In the chart, Democrats support greater investment in afterschool education at 91%, Independents support it at 81%, and Republicans support it at 84%.*
CITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Increase funding for OST programs through the city’s general fund budget.

During the summer of 2019, the Dallas community felt the weight of increased gun violence and crime across the city, including incidents that involved young children. The Mayor’s Task Force on Safe Communities found “several neighborhood groups and Task Force members have specifically been calling for increasing out of school time opportunities that give kids positive activities to focus on.” As the FY 19-20 City of Dallas budget was being crafted, afterschool advocates called for an increased investment in youth programming, which resulted in $975,000 for the All Youth Access Passes and $500,000 additional dollars for Park and Recreation afterschool programs. Even with this investment, thousands of children are still in need of a program to attend.

2. Allocate additional Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds specifically for afterschool and summer programming.

In 2018, The City of Dallas distributed the HUD consolidated five-year plan survey and Dallas Afterschool mobilized over 300 community members to advocate for additional HUD funds to go towards OST opportunities. With 91% of public comments calling for additional afterschool programming, Dallas saw a 50% increase in funding with $300,000 being invested into afterschool and summer programs. Additional investment is still needed to ensure families continue to have access to childcare and it does not continue to be a barrier for working families.

In Dallas, there is significant bipartisan support for greater investment in afterschool.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Support Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>83%</td>
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AFTERSCHOOL IS MORE EXPENSIVE IN DALLAS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Average Weekly Cost</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta</td>
<td>$98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>$90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallas</td>
<td>$120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>$82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The annual cost of afterschool in Dallas is $4,300 (this does not include breaks or summer programming).
Require Additional Days School Year (ADSY) eligible campuses to partner with OST programs to enable full-day programming.

In 2018, House Bill 3 allocated funds to allow school systems to add up to 30 half-days of instruction to their elementary school calendars. The ADSY program was created to prevent summer learning loss, a contributing factor to low test scores for low-income students. Although half-day school will provide some benefits, it will not allow parents to maintain full-time employment, while students still miss out on a full day’s worth of enrichment activities. If districts partnered with local enrichment agencies, they could lower costs while providing true, high-quality wrap around services for parents and students.

Include an afterschool and summer program on every public elementary and middle school campus.

The need for afterschool is felt in all communities, particularly in low-income neighborhoods. A recent study commissioned by Dallas Afterschool identified the ten highest-priority neighborhoods based on a combined weighted score of demographic factors such as afterschool and school performance, neighborhood conditions, gentrification, and access to public transportation. In the majority of the top ten highest-priority neighborhoods, there are not even enough free or low-cost seats to serve 10% of the student population. In Pleasant Grove, for instance, 380 seats exist to serve 8,500 children under the age of 14, or 4% of the eligible population. Opening OST programs on school campuses directly addresses issues associated with building space, rent, neighborhood proximity, and community trust.

Include afterschool and summer programming on all Community Hubs created by the 2020 Dallas ISD district bond offering.

In November 2020, Dallas voters approved Proposition A, which includes $40 million to fund the creation of four Community Hubs in Pleasant Grove, West Dallas, South Dallas, and Oak Cliff. As our afterschool access map reveals, these communities have little access to OST programs – with Pleasant Grove representing the largest OST desert in Dallas County. We encourage the District’s Office of Racial Equity to prioritize OST programming as it plans which services to incorporate into these critically-important community centers.

Extend bus service to provide transportation at the end of the afterschool day and throughout the summer for all campus-based programs.

Transportation continues to be one of the primary barriers facing OST providers and families. Many providers delivering services on a school campus do not have the capacity to run buses at the end of programming each day. Similarly, over 50% of families report a lack of reliable transportation as one of the primary reasons they do not send their children to OST programs.
Dallas Afterschool is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works to level the playing field for children of all races and economic backgrounds by building a sustainable ecosystem of high quality out-of-school time programs. For the past 14 years, we have informed community stakeholders, supported out-of-school time programs and their staff members, and coordinated community resources.

We envision a community with the resources and the will to provide impactful learning beyond the school day for all children.

We would like to acknowledge the following community partners for their endorsement of our 2021 OST Policy Brief:

A comprehensive reference list for all data in this report is available here.