

# Investing in Your Community's Future:

## What Every Local Elected Official Needs to Know about Afterschool



As a local elected official, you undoubtedly have a strong desire to respond to your citizens' needs and make a difference in your community. Afterschool programs offer a cost effective opportunity to improve citizens' lives in the present as well as prepare the community for a brighter future and should be at the forefront of any action agenda.

Afterschool programs can be an important piece of a city's public safety initiative, support education, and lead to a more productive workforce.

### Why afterschool?

The number of families where one or both parents work outside the home is continuing to increase. This places increased pressure on working parents to find suitable childcare for their families. However, as many as 15 million children do not have a safe place to go after school.<sup>1</sup> Afterschool programs represent a great asset to communities, but demand for programs continues to outpace supply. Transportation barriers also keep youth from accessing quality afterschool programs. Investments in afterschool programs are a proven way to keep kids safe, help children grow and learn, and assist working families.



## Helping Children Grow and Learn

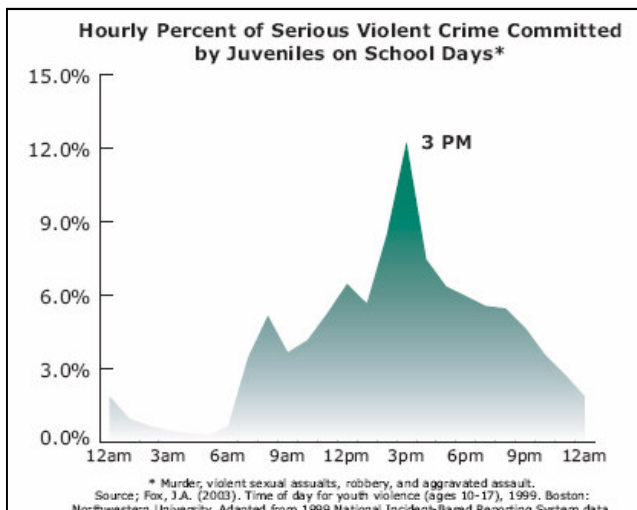
### Afterschool participants receive better grades, miss fewer days of school and have higher high school graduation rates.

- A 2.5 year evaluation found that PROJECT LEARN (a program of the Boys & Girls Clubs) participants increased their overall grade point average by 11 percent and increased their spelling grade point average by 22 percent. Participants also missed 87 percent fewer days in school, compared with non-Boys & Girls Club youth.<sup>2</sup>
- Regular attendees of the Young Scholars afterschool programs in North Carolina averaged double digit increases in math and reading proficiency.<sup>3</sup>



## Keeping Kids Safe

- The hours immediately following school are the peak hours for juvenile crime and experimentation with drugs alcohol, cigarettes, and sex.<sup>4</sup>
- Afterschool programs may reduce risky sexual behavior. Students who spend no time in extracurricular activities are 37% more likely to become teen parents than those who spend one to four hours per week in extracurricular activities.<sup>5</sup>
- 22% of school age children in North Carolina are unsupervised afterschool.<sup>6</sup> The afterschool hours are the time when juveniles are most likely to be the victim of a criminal act.<sup>7</sup>



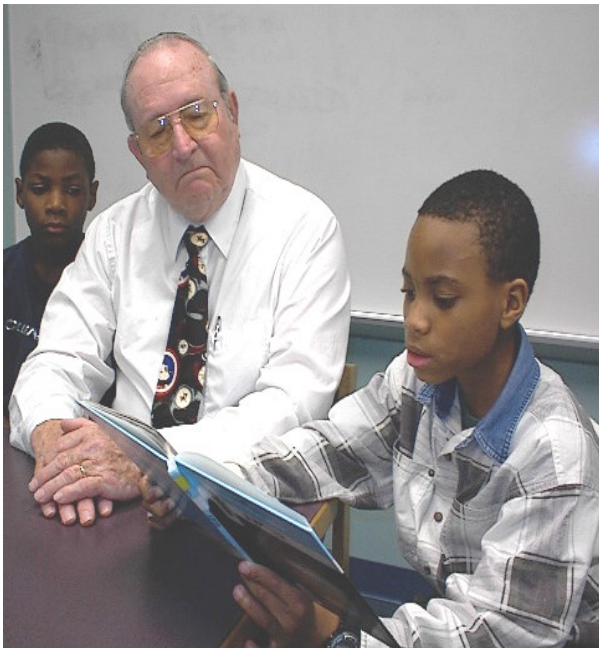
## Helping Working Families

- 87 percent of working mothers say that the time afterschool is when they are most worried about their children's safety. This can also lead to lower productivity, high turnover, and absenteeism.<sup>8</sup>
- 60 percent of parents said they missed less work after enrolling their children in an afterschool program, and 59 percent said that afterschool programs helped them keep their jobs.<sup>9</sup>
- According to the North Carolina Working Parents survey, 91% of working parents believe afterschool programs are an absolute necessity.<sup>10</sup>



# Top 5 Reasons Local Officials Should Become Advocates for Afterschool

There are a number of reasons that local officials should become advocates for afterschool programs. For example, public safety is the one of the most important functions of local government, and afterschool programs can help reduce juvenile crime and victimization. Afterschool programs are also an investment in the future. The academic and personal gains from participation in afterschool programs can better prepare youth for the workforce. Having access to afterschool care can help parents get and maintain jobs. The following are some of the many reasons that local officials should support increased access to and funding for high quality afterschool programs in their communities.



## 1.) Afterschool programs help reduce juvenile crime

Juvenile crime rates triple after school lets out. Afterschool participants are less likely to commit crimes or be the victims of crime.<sup>11</sup>

## 2.) Afterschool programs reduce risky behaviors

Unsupervised eighth graders are twice as likely to smoke, drink or abuse drugs as those who attend afterschool programs.<sup>12</sup>

## 3.) Afterschool programs are a good investment for communities

An evaluation of the Quantum Opportunities afterschool program showed that every \$1 invested in the program produced \$3 in public benefits.<sup>13</sup> North Carolina Young Scholars afterschool programs, on average, cost only \$7.50 per day for each student.<sup>14</sup>

## 4.) Students in afterschool programs do better in school and have lower drop out rates

An evaluation of the LA's Best afterschool program showed that participants were 20% less likely to drop out of school than those not in the program.<sup>15</sup> In the North Carolina Young Scholars Afterschool Programs, the number of students receiving A's and B's increased 38%, while the number of students receiving F's decreased by an average of 50%.<sup>16</sup>

## 5.) Constituents see the value of afterschool programs

91% of working parents in North Carolina think afterschool programs are an absolute necessity.<sup>17</sup> A majority of Americans are also willing to pay more taxes to support afterschool programs.<sup>18</sup>

# How can you get involved?

As a local official, there are many options to improve the availability and quality of afterschool programs in your community.

- **Visit a local afterschool site.** Seeing a program operate first hand can help raise awareness about the specific issues facing your community's afterschool programs.
- **Talk to local community members about how afterschool care issues affect their lives.** Citizens provide a different perspective from program providers about the issues facing your community.
- **Ask your local school board what your school district is doing to fund afterschool programs.** Many state and federal funding streams can be used to support afterschool programs. See whether your district is using these funds to support afterschool.
- **Start an afterschool program in your community or pledge funding to expand access to existing programs.** Throughout the country, mayors and other elected officials have championed community-wide afterschool initiatives. The Finance Project offers examples of successful initiatives on its website ([www.financeproject.org/irc/ost/profiles.asp](http://www.financeproject.org/irc/ost/profiles.asp)).
- **Approach state and federal officials to increase funding available to support afterschool programs.** The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center program is the largest federal funding source that directly supports afterschool programs. However, it is currently funded far below the amount authorized by the No Child Left Behind legislation.
- **Join the Afterschool for All 2010 Campaign.** This national effort seeks to raise awareness about the issue of afterschool and increase access to high quality programs. ([www.afterschool2010.org](http://www.afterschool2010.org))

## References

1. US Census Bureau, Urban Institute estimate, 2000
2. "Making a Difference in the Lives of Youth," National Youth Development Information Center, 2005
3. "Young Scholars Program: an Overview," North Carolina Center for Afterschool Programs, 2006
4. Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2002
5. National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and National Institute on Health (NIH) Monitoring the Future Study, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research, 2002.
6. Afterschool in North Carolina Fact Sheet, [http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/states\\_docs/pdfs/NC.pdf](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/states_docs/pdfs/NC.pdf)
7. Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2002
8. "Afterschool programs help working families," issue brief no. 16, [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org), October 2003
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15. Keeping Kids in School: An LA's BEST Example, UCLA, National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing, 2006
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17. NCCAP Working Parents Afterschool Survey
18. Afterschool Alliance, *Afterschool Poll Report*. Issues 1-6: 1998-2003, [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org)

## About NC CAP

NC CAP was created to bring together North Carolina's afterschool providers, community leaders and policymakers to build a network that addresses the afterschool program issues of quality, accessibility and sustainable funding. NC CAP is supported by public, private and nonprofit entities dedicated to making access to quality afterschool a reality for all children and youth. Our founding supporters include: the Office of the Governor (North Carolina), Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, N.C. Department of Juvenile Justice and the N.C. Department of Instruction. More information is available at [www.nccap.net](http://www.nccap.net).