



RECOMMENDATIONS ON AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

**CALIFORNIA WORKING FAMILIES POLICY SUMMIT
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INTRODUCTION

After-school programs are a beacon for the millions of working families in California who need a safe, enriching environment for their children in the hours after the last school bell rings. These programs provide caring adult supervision, varied enrichment and recreation activities, and academic assistance for children and youth. Research has shown after-school programs produce tangible developmental, social, and academic benefits for children, while also leading to long-term cost savings for communities. Investments in after-school programs promote positive child and youth development, while helping to mitigate the human and financial costs associated with risky behavior, child victimization, and juvenile crime- all of which occur at higher rates when after-school options are limited.

In 2002, California voters passed Proposition 49, the After-school Education and Safety (ASES) Act, to secure ongoing funding for permanent, universal after-school programs at elementary, middle, and junior high schools throughout the state. Proposition 49 was championed by then-citizen Arnold Schwarzenegger, who has been a longtime supporter of after-school programs. Proposition 49 expanded California's existing after-school grant program from \$122 million to a guaranteed \$550 million annually. Proposition 49 was written with a trigger mechanism, so that new funds would not be released until the first fiscal year when state General Fund expenditures exceed 2000 levels by at least \$1.5 billion. That trigger occurred in 2006, and a Request for Proposals (RFP) for roughly \$428 million in funding went out in the fall of 2006, with new grants awarded early in 2007. All of the guaranteed \$550 million was requested and granted in this first round, so no RFP has occurred since.

Also in 2006, advocates, together with Senator Tom Torlakson, spearheaded a successful effort to make significant revisions to Proposition 49 that were deemed critical to ensure the success of the initiative. Those revisions, accomplished through Senate Bill 638, included: prioritizing funding for schools serving high numbers of children from low-income families; increasing the daily per child rate and maximum grant amounts; reforming the evaluation system so that developmental and social outcomes are valued alongside academic outcomes; and allocating a larger portion of California's federal after-school money to high school after-school programs, which are not covered under Proposition 49.

There are now roughly 4,000 program sites serving roughly 400,000 students. These programs, which are run by partnerships of school districts and community-based entities, have worked extremely hard the past two years to get their administrative systems in place, to get program activities up and running, and to get children engaged and attending regularly. Program administrators are working to achieve the academic and developmental outcomes we hope and expect to see.

POLICY OBJECTIVE #1

Protect Proposition 49 by more effectively aligning with Proposition 98.

Background

Proposition 49 was written to protect after-school funding even in difficult budget years, while allowing for reductions in only limited circumstances. As a result, in a year when Proposition 98 education funding guarantees are suspended, Proposition 49 funding is left fully intact, even when other education programs face cuts. (Under the express language of the initiative, Proposition 49 funding may be reduced proportionately only when there is both (a) a “Test 3” year under Proposition 98 and (b) Proposition 98 funding is less than the preceding year.) Because Prop 49 is set aside in this way in the General Fund, and also because it has no revenue source attached to it, the legislature has understandably eyed it as a program over which they should have more control to set funding levels. In fact, in 2008 the legislature sent a bill to the Governor (AB 1526) that would have put a measure on the ballot to give full funding authority over the ASES program to the legislature, but it was vetoed by the Governor.

Despite having a secure funding stream, after-school programs- unlike a vast majority of other categorical education programs including school-age child care- have no mandated Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) and also have one of the lowest daily per child rates of any other program at \$7.50 per child per day (which must be matched with an additional \$2.50 by the local community). Without a COLA to keep pace with rising costs, programs eventually may not be able to run quality after-school programs and may even elect to turn back their grants.

Recommended Actions

The legislature should pass legislation to:

- A. Amend Proposition 49 through a ballot initiative so that funding can be reduced proportionately if Proposition 98 is suspended.
- B. Add a COLA to the ASES program commensurate with other Prop 98 funded categorical programs.

POLICY OBJECTIVE #2

Increase support for summer and year-round programs.

Many Americans have a wonderful image of summer as a carefree, happy time when “kids can be kids,” and they take for granted the prospect of enriching experiences such as summer camps, time with family, and trips to museums, parks, and libraries.

Unfortunately, some youth face anything but idyllic summer months. When the school doors close, many children struggle to access educational opportunities, as well as basic needs such as healthy meals and adequate adult supervision. Here are some sobering facts about summer for children in this country:

- All young people experience learning losses when they do not engage in educational activities during the summer. Research spanning 100 years shows that students typically score lower on standardized tests at the end of summer vacation than they do on the same tests at the beginning of the summer (White, 1906; Heyns, 1978; Entwisle & Alexander 1992; Cooper, 1996; Downey et al, 2004).

- Most students lose about two months of grade-level equivalency in mathematical computation skills over the summer months. Low-income students also lose more than two months in reading achievement, despite the fact that their middle-class peers make slight gains (Cooper, 1996).
- More than half of the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income youth can be explained by unequal access to summer learning opportunities. As a result, low-income youth are less likely to graduate from high school or enter college (Alexander et al, 2007).
- Children- particularly children at high risk of obesity- gain weight more rapidly when they are out of school during summer break (Von Hippel et al, 2007).
- Parents consistently cite summer as the most difficult time to ensure that their children have productive things to do (Duffett et al, 2004).

While California has shown clear support for children in the after-school hours during the school year, summer has been somewhat forgotten in the discussion about what children need when they're not in school. There's practically no public funding specifically for summer programs, and the funding streams that can be used are difficult to redirect for this purpose (such as Title 1, Supplemental Educational Services, etc.).

Recognizing the need to bring more attention to this issue, in 2008 after-school advocates promoted and the legislature authorized a new Task Force on Summer and Intersession Enrichment (ACR 134, DeSaulnier). This Task Force is charged with examining what's currently happening to disadvantaged children in the summertime and making recommendations to the legislature and Governor on the state's role in addressing this challenge.

Recommended Actions

- A. The State Legislature should pass new legislation to direct more of our federal after-school dollars (21st Century Community Learning Centers program) to year-round programs, so that after-school programs can continue their services through the summertime if they choose to. (NOTE: See Policy Objective #3 for specifics on how to accomplish this.)
- B. The Governor, State Legislature and Superintendent of Public Instruction should advocate for an increase in the 21st CCLC budget at the federal level, so that California will receive more funds for after-school and summer programs. Currently, there is about a billion dollars dedicated to this program nationally, though is it authorized for up to \$2.5 billion. President-elect Obama has proposed doubling the 21st CCLC to a \$2 billion level, which would result in an additional \$140 million for California.
- C. The Governor, State Legislature and Superintendent of Public Instruction should advocate for funding for the federal STEP-UP Act. The Summer Term Education Programs for Upward Progress (STEP UP) Act establishes a grant program to support summer learning opportunities for children in low-income communities. Despite extensive research on the benefits of summer learning programs, there are currently no federal programs that exclusively target the summer months as a key strategy to close the achievement gap and promote healthy youth development. STEP UP would address this void by providing summer learning opportunities through grants to states that would be allocated to school districts or other educational service providers. STEP-UP, introduced by Senators Obama and Mikulski, was authorized by Congress in 2007, but no appropriation has yet been approved.

POLICY OBJECTIVE #3

Streamline and simplify the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program.

The federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers program (21st CCLC) supports school-linked, after-school programs for students attending schools serving high numbers of low-income families. Originally the 21st CCLC program was directly administered by the U.S. Department of Education to local grantees, but moved to state administration in 2002. The law allows for programs to take place before school, after-school, and in the summer and intersession periods. The program serves elementary, middle and high school students.

When the state created its plan for implementing the 21st CCLC program, it was modeled after California's existing after-school program (then called ASLSNPP, now called ASES), with the same daily per child rate, currently set at \$7.50. Setting the daily rate at the same level, however, created several problems:

- Federal law requires all 21st CCLC grantees to offer family literacy services, which is not required in the state program, and can require additional resources beyond what's provided in the daily rate;
- Prior to state administration, the 21st CCLC program was flexible and sufficient enough to provide transportation in small and rural communities, or pay for other services necessary to ensure access to the program for all students who needed it; and
- The state program requires a local match of 33%, so it assumes a total daily expenditure of at least \$10 per day (the \$7.50 daily rate plus a 33% local match of \$2.50). However, due to constraints in federal law, 21st CCLC does not require a match, so this has created an inequity in the actual daily service rate.

The state made an attempt to resolve the first two issues by creating separate small pots of money that applicants can request to satisfy the federal guidelines and intent: one called "Family Literacy" and another called "Direct Access." Each of these requires a separate application in addition to the basic application required for after-school grants, making the whole application process extremely burdensome for both the applicant and the Department of Education.

The issue of the inequity in daily per child rates between the state and federal program due to differences in matching fund requirements has never been addressed. Because the 21st CCLC program cannot require a match, the policy assumes grantees are spending a straight \$7.50 per day per child, whereas in the state program, with the matching requirement, a \$10 daily expenditure is assumed. Since the 21st CCLC programs are required to provide at least as much service and are governed predominately by the same rules, this inequity needs to be remedied.

Recommended Actions

The State Legislature should:

- A. Raise the daily per child rate in 21st CCLC programs to \$10.
- B. Raise the grant caps in 21st CCLC programs commensurately.
- C. Eliminate the Family Literacy and Direct Access grants for 21st CCLC programs (with some possible exceptions for very small or rural grantees).
- D. Set the daily per child rate for summer 21st CCLC programs at \$20 (assuming a minimum of 6 hours of service).

For more information about these recommendations, contact:

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