



CALIFORNIA  
SCHOOL-AGE  
CONSORTIUM

## RECOMMENDATIONS ON AFTERSCHOOL CARE

CALIFORNIA WORKING FAMILIES POLICY SUMMIT  
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### *Introduction*

California just initiated the largest funding for afterschool programs of any state in the country, the result of Proposition 49, citizen Schwarzenegger's ballot initiative passed by voters in 2002. Last year, money promised by Prop. 49 was released, boosting state afterschool program funding from \$121 million to \$550 million. As a result, the state's After School Education and Safety (ASES) program could now serve up to 400,000 children, far more than the 132,000 last year. But simply applying money to programs doesn't always make them successful, nor does it solve persistent funding issues faced by California's other afterschool programs, so the question remains: how to make the best use of all the state's afterschool investments.

As California's state-funded afterschool programs expand, the industry needs to confront the fact that afterschool job availability far outstrips workforce availability. California, which receives a similar amount of federal 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center (21<sup>st</sup> Century) funding for afterschool programs as New York and all six states in New England combined,<sup>1</sup> also needs to acknowledge that its afterschool workforce has now grown to a point where professional competencies and standards are not only due, but are necessary. As more children participate in afterschool programs, California should consider that while afterschool programs have been proven to positively affect children, we must ensure this benefit by establishing a set of standard competencies. California's children depend upon it.

It is equally important that policymakers, at the very least, maintain all existing levels of afterschool and school-age care funding. While ASES may cast a wide net, that net has holes that let slip through many other components of the state's afterschool universe. ASES is not available in every community, and, despite increased funding levels, it still does not cover all children in the communities where it is available. New ASES funding has serious limitations. It does not afford funding for programs serving children with special needs, for programs that give kids a place to go when on vacation from school, or for children needing transportation to their rural programs. For that matter, many of California's child care programs, from 0-5 and through school-age care, remain underfunded. Therefore, while some of California's afterschool funding issues have been addressed, by no means have all been addressed.

What follows are descriptions of issues that challenge the development of a sound statewide afterschool policy, and a set of policy objectives that will help chart the future of California's burgeoning afterschool programs and workforce.

## **POLICY OBJECTIVE #1**

### **Recruit and retain a trained afterschool workforce.**

#### ***Background***

California's afterschool workforce has always been challenged with hiring, training and retaining a skilled workforce.<sup>2</sup> Now with the ASES program fully funded, and the demands that it will place on the workforce, this challenge becomes critical. Decisions California policymakers set in place over the next year will have impacts that will resonate for many years.

Workforce development contains at least two elements: recruiting and hiring staff qualified to work in afterschool programs; and, once hired, supporting staff with skills- and knowledge-building trainings, increased monetary and benefit compensation reflecting levels of responsibility, and providing a career ladder. Apart from projects spearheaded by afterschool advocacy and support organizations, there is no comprehensive statewide workforce hiring initiative to recruit and train afterschool workers. While workforce development is one of the three components underscored in the "After School Planning Project for California," the Boston Consulting Group study commonly known as California's Afterschool Master Plan, this plan has yet to be implemented.

Moreover, the afterschool workforce is growing every year, and this year in particular. At the same time, the national turnover rate is estimated to be as high as 40 percent per year.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, California should implement a comprehensive recruiting and training program for afterschool's hiring needs. Just as importantly, and to increase retention, there needs to be an effort to push for more full-time positions, allowing those who choose afterschool as a career to be able to afford an afterschool career.

#### ***Recommended Actions***

- A. The Advisory Committee on Before and After School Programs, created when Governor Schwarzenegger signed Senate Bill 854, should convene a study group comprising the California Department of Education, workforce investment boards, community college administrators, and youth employment agencies to investigate ways to expand and coordinate existing publicly funded workforce systems and employment resources to help extend and expand the afterschool workforce.
- B. The Department of Education and California's Employment Development Department should work with the field in a concerted outreach effort aimed at population groups that mirror the existing afterschool workforce. Because the field is largely part time, it is important to conduct outreach to groups interested in part-time work, including college students (especially those in child care programs at state-funded colleges who may be looking for part-time jobs to help increase their experience and knowledge in their chosen field).
- C. In an effort to create full-time work from part-time jobs, the Department of Education should create a program that will match school day jobs with afterschool and/or preschool jobs to create full-time positions with benefits and offer a more sustainable career choice.

## **POLICY OBJECTIVE #2**

### **Defining and implementing standards for a professional development track for afterschool staff.**

#### ***Background***

There is no question California's afterschool programs, state and federally funded as well as private programs, are growing. As the workforce jumps from an estimated 120,000 to 132,000 this year alone, the need for agreed-upon, acceptable quality standards for afterschool staff becomes more acute. This is increasingly significant when one considers that while rules and regulations guide and govern California's schools, child care, and preschool programs, there remains no consistent set of professional development qualifications for afterschool staff. In a state that is recognized as a national leader in broad-based afterschool programming, it

is troubling that, while California languishes, other states move ahead implementing basic qualifications and benchmarks for their afterschool workers.

Professional development can influence programs on at least two levels.<sup>4</sup> First, based on the staff's educational attainment and participation in training workshops, well-trained afterschool staff can positively affect youth outcomes, reinforcing good social behaviors and academic performance. Second, studies in early childhood education show that when staff members are presented with a clear career ladder that includes wage increases and benefits, staff retention and morale are perceptibly increased.<sup>5</sup> Many providers agree, and research has shown,<sup>6</sup> that professional development benefits programs by increasing retention and adding quality. However, providers don't feel they can afford the time or expense for comprehensive professional development, despite its well-known value.<sup>7</sup> But it is precisely this framework for a career ladder that will increase retention and quality, and lessen the time and money administrators will have to spend hiring a revolving-door staff.

### ***Recommended Actions***

- A. The afterschool community, working with the California Department of Education, should articulate reasonable measures, qualifications, and benchmarks of professional development to lay the foundation for a basic set of agreed-upon, comprehensive competencies for afterschool professional development. Because afterschool programs impact more of California's children every year, it is in the best interests of the afterschool field and stakeholders to grapple with this issue now, before it is taken up by other parties. These competencies should contain a career ladder component that gives staff the opportunity to fully understand where their professional development will take them.
1. As the ASES budget provides 1.5 percent for technical assistance, the Department of Education should dedicate these funds to supporting comprehensive professional development.
  2. A financial incentive system to encourage professional development should be established. This would grant any program offering a comprehensive, approved professional development track to be awarded increased reimbursement based on the training and advanced qualifications of its staff.

### **POLICY OBJECTIVE #3:**

**Maintain and responsibly coordinate all present funding and funding commitments for all school-age care programs.**

### ***Background***

While the boost in funding for ASES is a positive first step toward comprehensive afterschool programs in California, ASES still does not offer afterschool programs throughout the *entire* 180-day school year, nor does it cover the 185 days when children are not in school. As such, ASES should not be considered the solution to all of California's family, children, and youth needs. Other child care programs, such as Latchkey and General Child Care, remain essential to provide families and their children with care that ASES does not. These are vital programs that should not be cut just because Prop. 49 is now funded.

Furthermore, ASES, in many respects, assumes all children are of equal abilities. But children with special needs, those children considered by the Americans with Disabilities Act to have a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, are not being adequately served. Current ASES policy does not have specific language that provides for these children, a situation that can create confusion for parents and providers alike. This should be addressed as these children still need full and equitable access to afterschool programs.

In addition, high school afterschool programs have not been funded through ASES. However, with the signing of Senate Bill 638 that administered ASES funds, the state committed to spending 50 percent of 21<sup>st</sup> Century funds for high school programs through its After School Safety and Enrichment for Teens program (ASSETs). Currently, there are fewer than 60 ASSETs programs (out of well over 1,000 high schools).<sup>8</sup> As

more federal afterschool grantees serving younger students shift to the state program, more federal 21<sup>st</sup> Century dollars will be freed up for high school programs.

### ***Recommended Actions***

- A. The Governor and California Legislature should make no funding cuts to any program that supports children who are left out of the ASES program. This includes programs that operate outside of the school year and programs that cover children not specifically covered by ASES. At the very least, funding for these programs should remain at present levels.
- B. Current ASES legislation should be amended to include provisions for education to providers on accessibility for children with special needs, additional dollars to help pay for these provisions, and a comprehensive way to leverage current special needs resource systems to support the families of children with special needs and the providers who serve them.
- C. ASES only covers afterschool programs for elementary and middle school students. But older youths are also in need of afterschool programs, and are more likely to get in trouble when left unsupervised after school. California's high school afterschool program, the ASSETs program, is supported with federal 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center funds. Funding should increase from less than \$10 million to up to \$60 million over the next few years, as dictated with the passage of SB 638. The Governor and California State Legislature should maintain their commitment to high school afterschool programs and help ensure that these programs are effectively implemented and can achieve long-term sustainability.
- D. California Legislators should pass a resolution calling on Congress to fully fund 21<sup>st</sup> Century commitments that were made when the No Child Left Behind Act was signed. The Act authorizes \$2.5 billion for the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers afterschool initiative in FY 2007, but Congress is expected to provide less than \$1 billion next year. If the initiative were funded at No Child Left Behind levels, 1.5 million more children throughout the United States would have access to quality afterschool programs.<sup>9</sup>
- E. Because there are many public afterschool resources, including ASES, 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Latchkey, and General Child Care, the Department of Education, working with key stakeholders, should form a task force to study the most efficient ways to blend this support so that California can better serve more school-age children and ensure that afterschool funding is spent responsibly and effectively, and that all types of afterschool and school-age care are fully and adequately funded.

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<sup>1</sup> United States Department of Education, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers, <http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/statetables/07stbyprogram.pdf>, October 17, 2006 Pg. 16.

<sup>2</sup> California School-Age Consortium, "California Afterschool at a Glance: A Statewide Snapshot of Kids and the Programs that Serve Them.," 2004.

<sup>3</sup> The Future of Children, WHEN SCHOOL IS OUT, Deborah Lowe Vandell, Lee Shumow, Vol. 9, No. 2, Fall 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Harvard Family Research Project, "Promoting Quality Through Professional Development, Number 8, August, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Economic Policy Institute, "The Early Childhood Career and Wage Ladder: A Model for Improving Quality in Early Learning and Care Programs," July, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Harvard Family Research Project, "Promoting Quality Through Professional Development, Number 8, August, 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> WestEd, "California 21<sup>st</sup> Century High School After School Safety and Enrichment for Teens Program, Interim Report," January, 2006, Pg. 18.

<sup>9</sup> Afterschool Alliance, [http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/press\\_archives/Uncertain\\_Times\\_NR.pdf](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/press_archives/Uncertain_Times_NR.pdf), October 12, 2006.