

The Power of Afterschool Programs and the Value of an Afterschool Alliance

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Good morning and allow me to extend my personal welcome to the third Afterschool Alliance Summit. It is my pleasure to be here and be part of this most important movement.

The Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance is a network of individuals and organizations dedicated to supporting and advancing sustainable, quality afterschool and summer learning programs that result in improved academic, social, emotional, and physical outcomes for children and families in Hawai'i.

The Alliance works to ensure that all children in Hawai'i have access to affordable, quality afterschool and summer learning programs. And, there is much to be done to achieve our goal of quality programs for all children and youth.

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My own experiences with afterschool and summer programs began as a young man learning new inquiry teaching strategies in a summer enrichment program sponsored by the Curriculum Research & Development Group and University Laboratory School in 1970. That program continues to this day to offer high quality summer experiences for students they are unlikely to have in our schools. My experience has included my own children and now my grandsons participating in both afterschool and summer programs; and now as Principal Investigator for the Mott Foundation grant in support of the Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance.

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This morning I would like to address three interdependent aspects of our work, in no intended equal allocation of time

- The growing need for afterschool and summer programs and the impact of those programs, both real and potential
- The value added of the Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance, and
- The challenges and opportunities for working together for the future

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The past decade has seen much progress in the number of children who are able to take advantage of the opportunities and activities afterschool programs have to offer.

The 2014 *America After 3PM* report—which spans a decade of data on how children spend the hours between 3 pm and 6 pm— found that overall participation in afterschool programs has increased by almost 60 percent, with nearly 4 million more children in afterschool programs today.

Although sizeable gains have been made in afterschool program quality and participation, the unmet demand for afterschool programs continues to rise. In 2004, the parents of 15.3 million children said they would enroll their child in an afterschool program if one were available; today that number stands at 19.4 million.

Public support for federal funding of afterschool programs is strong, with a high-level of support across political party identification and geographic region.

Yet federal investment in afterschool programs has remained relatively flat over the past five years—growing less than 2 percent, from \$1.13 billion in 2009 to \$1.15 billion in 2014. Despite the growing call for afterschool programs, \$4 billion in grant requests have been denied due to insufficient federal funds and an increasing number of requests over the course of 10 years.

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Among the key findings of the *America After School* report we find that while participation in afterschool programs has increased, the unmet demand for afterschool programs continues to rise. And, there are distinct differences in afterschool program participation and demand across income levels and ethnicity. Participation in, and demand for, afterschool programs are much higher among children from low-income households compared to higher income households. That is, children from low-income households are more likely than their higher-income peers to participate in an afterschool program (20 percent versus 18 percent), and the demand for afterschool programs is much higher among low-income and rural families. Clearly, the cost and lack of a safe way for their children to get to and from afterschool programs are among the barriers for low-income families.

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According to the National Afterschool Alliance 26% (>54,000) of Hawai'i's K-12 children participate in afterschool programs, including over 5,000 kids in programs supported by the U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Learning Centers Initiative. However, Of all Hawai'i children not currently enrolled in afterschool, 38% (>59,000) would be likely to participate if an afterschool program were available in their community.

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While funding for afterschool and summer programs has remained relatively flat despite increasing demand, the fact is that investing in these programs saves money by

- Reducing crime and welfare costs;
- Improving performance at school; and
- Increasing earning potential.

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Furthermore, they keep children safe.

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Not to be overlooked are the healthy options afterschool and summer programs provide in physical activity and healthy food and beverage choices, reducing obesity and establishing life long healthy habits.

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America After 3 PM reports 80% of parents want programs to provide physical activities, and 70% want programs to offer healthy meals, snacks, and beverages.

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Much to the credit of existing afterschool and summer programs, the vast majority of parents are satisfied with the health and safety provided by these programs.

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Afterschool and summer programs have a particularly important role to play in improving academic achievement. More consistent time spent in afterschool activities during the elementary school years is linked to narrowing the gap in mathematics achievement, reduced school absences, and improved behavioral outcomes for students.

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The data indicate

- The more consistent the afterschool participation, the narrower the gap in mathematics achievement;
- There is no gap in low-income and high-income children's mathematics achievement at grade 5; and conversely,
- The more rarely students participate in afterschool activities, the wider the achievement gap.

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More time spent in afterschool is also associated with

- Better work habits;
- Improved academic performance;
- Gains in self-efficacy;
- Improved Grade Point Average;
- Increased attendance; and
- Fewer school absences.

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Afterschool provides the building blocks kids need to succeed in school and life, such as developing strong social skills and making better decisions. Not surprisingly, they are excited about learning, resulting in improved work habits and grades, and higher graduation rates

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And let's not forget that summer learning matters in maintaining learning and retention, with even greater impact with low income, ELL, and special needs students

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For these and other reasons, demand is growing.

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And support is strong among teachers and parents.

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Learning time afterschool and during the summer adds significantly to learning and enrichment that complements the school day.

High quality expanded learning opportunities incorporate key principles, such as

- School-community partnerships—building upon strong collaboration between communities and schools;
- Engaged learning—incorporating learning that is hands-on and engaging, including
 - Place-Based,
 - Project-Based, and
 - Student interest driven learning;
- And provides opportunities for Family engagement

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I would like to focus on two areas where I believe Afterschool and Summer programs can make huge differences for kids in Expanded Learning Opportunities: The Arts and STEM.

Afterschool programs are perfectly situated to support the efforts of schools and ensure that a wide breadth of arts learning experiences are available to students—offering an environment where students can build on music and art lessons learned during the school day, learn new art forms that may not be available at their schools, and deepen their connection to the art world.

Under No Child Left Behind, teachers and schools have been under pressure to increase their focus on reading and mathematics instruction, to the detriment of the arts.

To make a bad situation worse, students from low income households receive even less arts instruction than students in higher income households.

With the recent passage of the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), we may see some renewed interest and commitment to the arts, however standardized testing for reading and mathematics at grades 3 through 8 and once in high school remains in the law

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The arts have the ability to influence and shape a child's development on a number of levels—academically, socially and emotionally.

Involvement in the arts allows children to express themselves—tapping into their inventiveness and creativity—and is a fun outlet that positively stimulates and motivates students.

Evaluation after evaluation demonstrate the extrinsic, in addition to intrinsic, benefits that are transferred to children who participate in the arts, such as:

- Academic gains;
- Improved cognitive skills;
- Positive behaviors;
- Increased engagement; and
- Creativity

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This quote by the Chairman of the National Endowments for the Arts sums it all up. “Students who have arts-rich experiences do better across-the-board academically, and they also become more active and engaged citizens, voting, volunteering, and generally participating at higher rates than their peers.”

In short, they make our communities better.

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The Hawai‘i Arts Alliance, in partnership with HIDOE, has recognized this and partnered to successfully obtain a Turnaround Arts grant from the U.S. Department of Education, focused on narrowing the achievement gap and increasing student engagement using arts as a tool to help turn around low performing schools.

Artists Jack Johnson, Jake Shimabukuro, and Alfre Woodard each “adopted” Hawai‘i Turnaround Arts schools and work directly with students and teachers to support their learning.

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The second example I want to highlight is STEM education. Hawai‘i has recently adopted more rigorous standards in Language Arts, mathematics, and science. These new standards call for significant changes in teaching and learning, focusing much more heavily on inquiry and the practices that characterize the disciplines of mathematics and science and the ways of communicating through language arts. These are aligned with preparing all students to be college, career, and community ready.

The Hawai‘i Common Core Mathematics and Next Generation Science Standards support efforts in Hawai‘i and nationally to increase STEM education.

The interconnected content areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics touch all aspects of our lives. They underpin much of modern society and the economy and their study also hones observation and analysis skills, which are crucial in developing better problem-solvers and citizens in a complex and changing world. Nearly 80 percent of future careers will require awareness of and facility with STEM.

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But there is great concern that without access to adequate educational experiences in STEM fields, large segments of the population will be ill-prepared to participate effectively in the modern STEM-based workplace. Consequently, improving the quality of and access to STEM education is a high priority.

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Not surprisingly, Afterschool and Summer programs contribute to the strength and diversity of the nation’s STEM workforce. As Afterschool programs have expanded their offerings, many providers and funders have embraced STEM as a natural fit for the afterschool setting.

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Again, research also shows that what happens outside of school can be equally as important as what happens in school to set a child's direction and activate his or her interest in STEM.

Thus, science education improvement leaders recognize that afterschool programs play an important role in STEM learning, especially when it involves real science and engineering practices, such as running science experiments, analyzing data and developing explanations, or designing engineering solutions.

Data from the *America After 3 PM* 2014 study show STEM programs have become widespread in Afterschool and that quality Afterschool programs allow students to be immersed in STEM and build fluency in these subjects resulting in

- Improved student attitudes toward STEM fields and careers;
- Increased STEM knowledge and skills; and
- Increased likelihood of graduation and pursuing a STEM career.

More than 53% of parents report considering STEM when choosing an afterschool program

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Afterschool and Summer programs provide opportunities that schools simply cannot, including environmental, business, and community based learning. In Hawai'i, it is through Afterschool and Summer programs that we can engage students in Place-Based, Project-Based, and Culture Based learning.

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Let me now turn to the value of the Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance.

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Together we are more than the sum of our parts, or partnerships. We are a collective voice and advocacy in areas such as policies, legislation, and attracting funding; sharing resources, such as at this Summit; connecting partners; providing for our own professional development, and collaborating for continuous improvement.

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For example the bills tracked this legislative session, personal visits to legislators, and testimony submitted on behalf of the Alliance focused on a over a dozen bills related to Afterschool and Summer programs.

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As typically happens. only two survive, at least so far. SB 3099 Establishes the Hawai'i three to six out-of-school program for grades kindergarten through twelve, and authorizes the department of education to contract with private providers to furnish out-of-school programs. It makes appropriations not yet specified; and goes to Conference Committee Wednesday, April 27.

SB 2231 Establishes the R.E.A.C.H. (Resources for Enrichment, Athletics, Culture, and Health) program in the Office of Youth Services to provide a standardized framework and a funding

mechanism for after-school programs in public middle schools. It requires the Office of Youth Services to report to the Legislature. This bill went to Conference Committee on April 22.

But surprisingly a new resolution has emerged from the Legislature. HCR 137 SD2 requests the Department of Education to convene a Working Group to review after-school programs in Hawai‘i public middle and intermediate schools. The charge includes providing

- A timeline and inventory of existing afterschool programs;
- Data regarding current levels of costs, funding sources, and participation;
- Recommendations on improving availability;
- Recommendations on how collaboration can be promoted between agencies and stakeholders; and
- Development of efficient and collaborative ways to address funding, logistics, and outcomes of providing structured afterschool programs.

And, includes the Executive Director of the Hawai‘i Afterschool Alliance as a designated member of the Working Group

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We have set the foundation for the Alliance of the Future

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Among our future developments are those in three areas

1. Quality Program Guidelines;
2. Professional Development; and
3. Accountability through program evaluation for continuous improvement.

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First, Quality Program Guidelines that will enable us to identify, increase, and attract state, federal, and private sources of funding to support quality, specify goals and set research-based programming, measure the extent to which expanded learning opportunities achieve intended results, provide incentives to support quality in programs, support a strong afterschool and expanded learning workforce by developing and training core knowledge and competencies for staff, and connect students with high-quality afterschool programs.

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The Afterschool Alliance will be working with stakeholders to develop guidelines for quality afterschool and summer programs in Hawai‘i. Developing and implementing quality guidelines will help move programs, policymakers and systems toward developing a statewide support system for quality afterschool and expanded learning. The Guidelines will build the foundation for more programs of higher quality. Thirty three states have established or are developing practitioner guidelines, and 18 states have identified core knowledge and competencies—what practitioners should know and be able to do to.

Some of the characteristics of high-quality programs they identify include

- Positive relationships between students and staff;
- Positive relationships between students;

- A mix of academic and non-academic skill-building activities;
- High levels of student engagement;
- Mastery orientation; and
- Appropriate levels of structure.

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Second, Professional Development. Professional development helps us all get better at what we do. And we can achieve more through collaboration and sharing expertise than we can individually.

Afterschool professional development programs target many specific outcomes, such as increased staff knowledge about child and adolescent development, use of effective strategies for activity planning, and implementation of methods for promoting positive relationships with youth.

Many professional development initiatives also have the secondary goal of improving the quality and sustainability of the out-of-school workforce by increasing providers' marketable skills and by garnering public support for the youth development field.

We know from the available research that Professional development is most effective when it is:

- Rooted in adult learning theory, explaining why learning is necessary and content is valuable, treating participants as agents of their own learning and incorporating participants' pre-existing knowledge and experiences;
- Aligned with guidelines on program quality;
- Informed by research and evidence-based practice;
- Adapted to trends, community contexts and current events;
- Supported by a culture of continuous improvement for all engaged in learning; and
- Coupled with adequate resources, such as materials and time for integration of new learning into practice.

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The third area is Accountability. This morning I have tried to establish that afterschool field has made important progress in the past 10 years. The evidence that afterschool programs can deliver on multiple goals—academic, social, and behavioral—is much stronger than it was a decade ago.

But the context around us has also changed. The prevailing view seems to be that if Afterschool and other social programs are going to draw significant funding, often in competition with public schools and other needs, we must be able to produce positive results consistently.

Similar accountability pressures have occurred in preschool, K–12 education, most recently under NCLB, and now in higher education. One result of this pressure is increased attention to program quality within the field

As interest grows within the education community about how afterschool and summer programs can play a role in “expanded learning” efforts, challenging questions related to mission persist for providers.

- What should be the focus of afterschool programs? Is developing “21st century skills” such as personal responsibility, teamwork, and persistence paramount, or should programs be concerned with academic outcomes?
- Should programs be operated by schools, community organizations, or both?
- How do we know that programs are delivering on outcomes?

There is increased focus within the field on defining and improving program quality. As we have seen, Afterschool programs can have positive effects on academic, social, and behavioral outcomes, but not all programs that set out to achieve such effects do so, and we know that quality varies both within and across sites. Understanding why this is so has become an important priority.

Are varying results due to program content? Processes? Structure? Or characteristics of the organization implementing the program? Or features of the surrounding community?

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Which brings us to the importance of documenting evidence of effectiveness. Significant progress has been made on identifying the features of program effectiveness, designing valid and reliable ways to measure them, and helping program leaders and staff assess and improve outcomes. The challenge, of course, is how to measure effectiveness.

Historically, we have addressed program accountability by input variables, such as having qualified staff, resources, staff-student ratio, funding, facilities, etc. Now, however, attention has shifted to outcomes.

Increasingly, continuous quality improvement systems include observational assessments, performance assessments, staff/student created artifacts. And then the question becomes one of judgment on how good is good enough?

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And this leads us to Evaluation for Continuous Improvement in four areas: Research, Practice, Policy, and Funding.

We need better instruments designed to measure program quality. We need researchers who can help us produce better, scalable measures of youth behaviors and dispositions that contribute to school success, such as work habits, persistence, and engagement in learning, and others that push beyond the academic domain.

Practitioners need more validated, cost-effective approaches for continuously improving practice. One promising approach is for practitioners to partner with others, including researchers, to develop and test different improvement strategies. Through networked partnerships different approaches can be simultaneously tested in a short time and results compared and used to modify and extend promising practices, or reject those that do not seem to result in the intended outcomes.

In order to provide support for achieving desired outcomes, we need informed policies and funding. Afterschool and summer learning programs and systems are not able to bear the full cost of the important work of improving quality on their own. We need policies that support professional development and funding to document evidence-based practices that result in achievable outcomes.

We need public agencies and foundations that support programs, infrastructure, and research to seize the opportunity to subsidize the development of tools and strategies designed to support continuous improvement.

These are among the things the Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance seeks to achieve in the future.

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Today we join together to share commitment, resources, and expertise toward creating and sustaining a positive future for all children.

So, let's get on with the tasks at hand.

Thank you, and enjoy the rest of your conference.