

## **Municipal Leadership for Afterschool: Citywide Approaches Spreading across the Country**

### **Key Findings and Facts**

“Municipal Leadership for Afterschool: Citywide Approaches Spreading Across the Country,” a new report published by the National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education and Families and commissioned by The Wallace Foundation, highlights a growing trend in communities nationwide: the emergence of comprehensive, citywide afterschool systems for children and youth.

Drawing upon NLC’s work with hundreds of cities over the past decade, research funded by The Wallace Foundation, consultation with experts, and an extensive survey and interview process, the report identifies 27 cities that are among the most advanced in their efforts to coordinate afterschool opportunities and includes detailed city profiles documenting their progress on key system-building elements. Visit [www.nlc.org/citywide-approaches-to-afterschool](http://www.nlc.org/citywide-approaches-to-afterschool) to view the full report.

### **Impact of Citywide Approaches and Committed Leadership on Key Outcomes:**

- In many cities, coordinated approaches are yielding concrete gains in academic outcomes and public safety.
- The City of **Grand Rapids**, in partnership with Grand Valley State University’s Community Research Institute, released a report revealing that youth engaged in afterschool programs between 3:00 and 6:00 p.m. were substantially less likely to participate in risky or criminal behaviors. As afterschool programming expanded to all public schools, the city experienced a 25% drop in juvenile offenses from 2006 to 2009.
- A 2010 evaluation of the **Bridgeport, Conn.**, Lighthouse program linked afterschool involvement with lower crime rates. Participants outperformed district test score averages.
- In **Louisville**, research by the Jefferson County Public School System highlighted gains in school attendance, lower suspension rates, and improved academic performance for regular afterschool program attendees.
- Among students participating in the **Portland, Ore.**, SUN Community School afterschool programs for 30 days or more, 75 percent improved their state reading test scores, and 77 percent improved their math scores. Elementary school students met or exceeded the state-defined average point gains in math and reading.
- In **St. Louis**, youth in afterschool programs are more likely to attend school regularly and have fewer instances of in-school discipline.
- A seven-year longitudinal evaluation of **Denver’s** school-based afterschool programs revealed higher rates of school attendance among middle school students compared with peers who did not attend OST programs, improvement in pro-social attitudes and skills, and lower dropout rates for elementary and middle school students who participated in afterschool programs and reached ninth grade or higher by the 2007-08 school year.

### Establishing a Citywide Coordinating Entity:

- A number of cities have well-developed mechanisms to manage a large group of afterschool providers and facilitate action on multiple system-building elements, including **Baltimore, Grand Rapids, Jacksonville, Philadelphia, Rochester and Tampa.**
- In **Louisville**, the city, school district and local United Way have developed YouthPrint – a comprehensive blueprint for increasing participation in high-quality afterschool programs that builds on the KidTrax data system and advances citywide efforts to boost educational attainment.
- In **St. Paul**, a new network called Sprockets grew out of a mayoral initiative to promote out-of-school learning opportunities that reinforce learning gains in the classroom.
- In **Portland, Ore.**, afterschool programs are a key component of a system of community schools and an emerging “cradle-to-career” framework of educational support for children and youth.
- The **Nashville** After Zone Alliance is adapting a successful model developed in Providence, R.I., in which a balanced menu of high-quality afterschool enrichment activities are organized within different geographic zones of the city.
- In **St. Louis**, an estimated 80-90 percent of programs benefit from the collaborative work of the St. Louis After School for All Partnership.

### Funding to Support Multi-Year Planning:

- In 20 of the cities, general fund revenues are being used to support afterschool initiatives.
- **Nashville** leaders appropriated \$400,000 in 2009 for the city’s neighborhood-based afterschool system and an additional \$600,000 to launch the city’s second “AfterZone” in January 2011.
- In 2010, **Omaha** municipal leaders passed a first-time ever budget line item of \$365,000 to support afterschool opportunities.
- The City of **Jacksonville** redeployed more than \$40 million in the 2009 budget to fund former Mayor John Peyton’s comprehensive anti-crime initiative, with \$3.8 million allotted to create and fully fund 15 new afterschool programs.
- In eight cities featured in the report, such as **Oakland, Calif.**, voters have approved ballot measures to slightly increase sales or property taxes or dedicate a portion of general revenue to programs for children and youth.

### Using Reliable Information to Drive Progress:

- Twenty-four of the 27 cities surveyed for this report have used data from multiple sources to map afterschool programs throughout their communities.
- Seventeen cities share participant data across providers and stakeholders, while 12 cities reported using management information systems (MIS) to track attendance data.
- **Louisville** leaders are embarking on an effort to identify elementary school students who are at risk of dropping out. By linking school district and afterschool data systems, they seek to

create a feedback loop that informs the early identification system about which afterschool program interventions work best for students.

### **Expanding Participation:**

- In a majority of the cities, less than half of the school-age population participates in OST programs, and in nine cities, fewer than one-quarter of students attend an OST activity.
- The most significant barriers to participation include cost, lack of transportation, and the location of programs.
- **San Francisco's** Afterschool for All initiative has made slots available for 94 percent of youth (38,298 individuals) who want to participate in an afterschool program.
- The **St. Louis** After School for All Partnership has created 3,200 new afterschool program slots for children and youth since 2007.
- The **Nashville** After Zone Alliance filled all of the available 250 slots in its first afterschool zone, effectively doubling the number of students in structured afterschool programs in this area. The South Central Zone programs, one month post-launch, are already at capacity, with 250 students participating in programs in January 2011.
- During the 2009-10 school year, approximately 6,800 **Seattle** Public Schools middle school (grades 6-8) students attended an afterschool program funded by the city's Families and Education Levy, representing 70 percent of students in those grades.
- The redeployment of city funds for the **Jacksonville** Journey anti-crime initiative led to the creation of 15 new afterschool programs at elementary and middle schools. 2,850 additional children were enrolled, bringing the number of locations with Jacksonville Children's Commission programs to a total of 62 sites serving almost 10,000 children daily.

### **Improving Program Quality:**

- More than half of the cities have adopted local afterschool program quality standards.
- Twenty-one cities use a quality assessment tool to help providers evaluate their programs.
- Twenty-two cities offer training opportunities to afterschool program staff.
- The **Jacksonville** Children's Commission allocates city funding to community-based afterschool providers and monitors program quality. The commission has a robust training arm to help providers meet local standards, and only programs that meet those standards receive city funding.

## Key Findings

1. During the past decade, more than two dozen cities with committed mayoral leadership have made a fundamental shift in their approach to the development of out-of-school time opportunities for children and youth, moving from managing or funding individual programs to building more comprehensive afterschool systems that engage city, school, and nonprofit providers in their communities.
2. The majority of the cities profiled in this study have used data-driven analyses of community needs – including a thorough assessment of current supply of and demand for programs across all neighborhoods – as a key starting point for their efforts.
3. City leaders clearly understand that quality matters and many have taken steps to improve the quality of local programs.
4. As their efforts to build comprehensive afterschool systems deepen and mature, leading cities have somewhat naturally gravitated to more sophisticated strategies that are designed to address more complex or deep-rooted challenges. For instance, efforts to adopt quality standards can lead to a greater focus on professional development for afterschool providers. By mapping programs or surveying residents on their needs, city leaders can identify and address barriers to access, such as transportation and cost.
5. Despite the severe economic crisis of the past several years and the extreme pressures it has placed on municipal budgets, a surprising number of leading cities report that they continue to invest funds from city general revenues in their efforts to build citywide OST systems.
6. The transition from supporting individual afterschool programs to building more comprehensive, citywide afterschool systems is a major change in how city and community partners do business that is altering perspectives, deepens local partnerships, improves the odds for sustainability, and generates momentum for long-term and continuous improvement.