



Budget Cuts to After-School Programs: What will the long-term costs be for this short-term solution?

To lead and succeed, young people need the skills to navigate a complex economy and an increasingly diverse nation. However, a significant number of youth, including Latino boys and girls, are at risk of losing a promising future.

In response to the economic crisis, New York made drastic cuts to human services, including youth development initiatives. Among these reductions proposed by Governor David Paterson is a devastating \$11 million cut on after-school programs.

Along with budget cuts in education, this reduction leaves thousands of students with fewer resources, or none at all, thus reducing their access to quality education. Opportunities that would improve educational outcomes, foster positive decision-making, and assist in developing the full potential of these students are dwindling. Despite attention on the underperformance of public education and increased anxiety about New York's economic future, children and youth continue to be shortchanged.

Currently, Latino students are the largest population in public schools at 39%¹, and are considered the fastest growing population. However if the academic achievement of Latinos remains as is, with only 55.9% graduating high school¹ and only 31.7% receiving a B.A.,¹ it could threaten the quality of life for, not only Latinos but New York as a whole. The success of current national efforts to refocus public schools towards providing quality education and graduating more students depends on the survival of supplemental after-school programs.

What is an after-school program?

After-school programs combine activities, projects, and enhancements such as art residencies, that range from community initiated to government sponsored, with a similar goal: to develop the learning and healthy development of youth outside the traditional classroom.¹ Activities may cover educational topics such as reading and math; or they may focus on the arts, culture, and building self-esteem. After-school programs complement academic and life lessons that occur in school, the community, and the home.

A Proven Investment with Positive Returns

Research highlights three major benefits linked to after-school programs: improved academic outcomes, reduced risks factors, and help for working families,¹ all of which produce long-term positive outcomes for the student, the community, and impact society as a whole. A recent study in New York City, with mostly Latino after-school participants, found students with higher levels of participation demonstrated higher levels of achievement in areas such as school attendance, reading, and as teachers reported, an increase in their motivation to learn.² Similarly, a recent evaluation of CHCF's after-school program by Learning Point Associates, found a positive association between math state scores and hours of program participation with a promising 2% increase in scores for every ten hours of programming a child received.³ In addition to academic support and serving as a safe haven, after-school programs offer opportunities to learn life skills such as conflict resolution, career preparation, and the development of healthy relationships.⁴

Quality after-school programs benefit the academic and social well-being of children, and also have an impact on working parents. Over 28 million school-age children have parents who work outside the home and this number is growing.⁵ A recent survey indicated that New York City working parents felt after-school programs assisted them in balancing their work with their family; 60% of parents said they missed less work than before, and 54% said it allowed them to work more hours to help provide for the family.⁶ Cutting funding for these programs will leave many parents worrying about the safety of their children when the school day ends.

The Cost of Not Having After-School Programs

There are many negative implications to cutting youth after-school programs. Budget cuts particularly impact youth living in low-income neighborhoods. Across the nation, at least 8 million children and youth are left alone and unsupervised once the school bell rings, and studies show that these out-of-school hours are primetime for juvenile crime.⁷ Keeping children involved in school and away from negative decision-making not only increases graduation rates, but also reduces the risk of incarceration. For every 1% increase in graduation rates, states save approximately \$1.4 billion in incarceration costs.⁸ Students who spend no time in after-school programs are 49% more likely to use drugs and 37% more likely to become teen parents than are those who spend 1 to 4 days per week in such activities.⁹ These factors increase the likelihood of dropping out.

The U.S. loses an estimated amount of \$260,000 lifetime earnings for each high school dropout and will pay \$60,000 less in taxes every year.¹⁰ It is estimated that on average high school graduates earn \$9,245 more per year than high school drop-outs,¹¹ which would increase not only income per family but also tax revenues for the state.

Although education has always been essential, educational attainment is now the only path towards a promising future. In many ways, after-school programs positively influence children and youth's educational achievements and character development. These students deserve the investment needed to become more than another statistic. Unfortunately, despite continuous findings on the advantages of after-school programs, they are still not receiving the stable support they require.

The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc. recommends:

1. The NYC Department of Youth and Community Development and the Department of Education should collaborate to utilize school resources more efficiently for after-school initiatives by designing a Community School Model of Education within the NYC public school system. Priority should be given to schools that are under-resourced and located in low-income communities. Already existing after-school programs should have primary consideration for increased funding and capacity building.
2. New York City Council should prioritize youth development initiatives, especially in low-income districts, and respond promptly to community based needs assessments done in their districts, which can lead to developing viable plans to improve community conditions.

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¹ Durlak, J.A., & Weissberg, R.P. (2007). *The Impact of After School Programs That Promote Personal and Social Skills*. Collaborative for Academic and Emotional Learning.

² ActKnowledge (2008). *Young Adolescents Learn and Thrive in After School Programs: Results of a Three-Year Evaluation in Six New York City Middle Schools*.

³ Learning Point Associates (2009). *New York City 21st CCIC Hunter College/Frontier in Urban Science Exploration: Year 1 Program Evaluation Report*.

⁴ National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center. (2001). *After-School Program Fact Sheet*.

⁵ Ibid. (2001).

⁶ NYSAN. (2009)

⁷ After School Alliance (2009). *Afterschool Programs: Making a Difference in America's Communities by Improving Academic Achievement, Keeping Kids Safe and Helping Working Families*.

⁸ NYSAN. (2009). *Pathways to Student Success: The Role of Afterschool Programs in Increasing High School Graduation Rates in New York State*.

⁹ National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center (2001). *After-School Program Fact Sheet*.

¹⁰ Levin, H.M. (2005). *The Social Costs of Inadequate Education*. The Campaign for Educational Equity. Sponsored by the Laurie H. Tisch Foundation

¹¹ NYSAN (2009)