



**Harvard Family  
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# **The Federal Role in Out-of-School Learning: After-School, Summer Learning, and Family Involvement as Critical Learning Supports**

**A Research Review Paper and Recommendations  
From Harvard Family Research Project**

**Commissioned by the Center on Education Policy, Washington, DC,  
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## THE EDUCATION PROBLEM

Nearly a third of America's children, disproportionately from racial and ethnic minorities or from low-income or recent immigrant families, are being left behind. They are not going to graduate from high school, go on to post-secondary schooling, or have the skills that they need—and that the country needs them to have—to succeed in a global economy and society. National concern about the serious implications for America's future of this growing loss of human potential is causing many to question the dominant assumption behind much current educational policy and practice: that school is *the only place* where and when children learn. This assumption is wrong. Forty years of steadily accumulating research in fact show that learning opportunities and support in the family, after school, and during the summer months are major predictors of children's development, learning, and educational achievement. The research also indicates that economically and otherwise disadvantaged children are less likely than their more-advantaged peers to have access to these out-of-school or "complementary learning" opportunities, and that this inequity substantially undermines their learning and chances for school success.

## Introduction and Overview

Acknowledging the importance of out-of-school learning opportunities and that "schools cannot do it alone," many now are asking the primary policy question that this paper will address: What, in conjunction with good schools, is necessary to increase the chances that all children, especially disadvantaged ones, will enter and leave school with the skills they need for 21st century success?

To answer this question, we review the existing research on the contributions of out-of-school learning supports to school success and examine the implications of the research for future federal education policy. Our review strongly indicates that it is time for the federal government to lead and support a major effort to reframe the definition of learning—what it is, who enables it, and when it takes place—to encompass all of the places where children and youth learn.

Working from this new definition of learning to guide education policy development, we offer a broader, research-informed, and potentially more powerful learning framework to replace the current inequitable, piecemeal, and often disconnected approach to out-of-school learning. We call this framework *complementary learning* because it links school and out-of-school supports so that they complement and reinforce each other across a child's development and school career. The evidence-based framework incorporates three learning supports: family involvement, after-school, and summer learning. These three supports, with good schools, are core and linked elements of a more powerful and equitable strategy to maximize the chances that all children will have the range of learning opportunities they need to meet high academic standards and to succeed not only in school but in the 21st century global economy and society.

While the federal government provides less than 10% of the funding for public education, it sets the national policy agenda and provides direction for states and schools in important ways. The recent federal commitment to more research-informed policy and to accountability has helped pave the way for the growing understanding that schools alone are not enough. This in turn

points to the heightened importance of the federal role in sparking and supporting educational innovation to ensure that all children reach their potential. The evidence that we review indicates the need for a fundamental transformation in how we think about and organize learning opportunities; the evidence suggests core components of a new education strategy, but it does not provide a recipe for moving forward. Therefore, we argue that the federal government should use its multiple resources to support innovation that will enable states, cities, community organizations, districts, and schools to plan, implement, and test different complementary learning approaches and models within a framework of learning, continuous improvement, and accountability.

### **Why Focus on Families, After-School, and Summer Learning Programs?**

We review the research about family involvement, after-school, and summer learning programs for several reasons. First, this research demonstrates that it *is* possible to make progress in reducing what Ladson-Billings (2006) has called the “educational debt.” The debt is compounding because current educational policy narrowly defines K-12 schools as the setting where learning occurs and fails to recognize how the capacity to learn is constricted or enhanced by circumstances and opportunities external to the school building. The debt compounds for disadvantaged children because not only do they often attend poorer schools with fewer resources, they also have less access or no access to the out-of-school learning supports, including family involvement and after-school and summer learning programs, which, decades of results clearly demonstrate, are important to learning and development. A growing body of evidence confirms that this lack of access contributes to and even predicts learning gaps across a child’s development. If we fail to address the issue of disadvantaged children’s inequitable access to complementary learning supports that address their health, mental health, and other needs, public schools will not achieve their mission of educating all children.

Second, the quality and amount of research in these areas is sufficient to make judgments about the significant contributions of these learning opportunities to children’s development, and particularly to their school-related outcomes. Each area also has enough rigorous evaluations of interventions to make a fair and reasonable judgment that it is possible to intervene and get positive results that support learning and school success.

Third, all of these areas have evidence that interventions can contribute to children’s academic achievement as well as to the broad array of skills that economists, educators, employers, and others now agree are necessary for “success” in the 21st century (Heckman, 2008; Levy & Murnane, 1996; Silva, forthcoming; TLA Taskforce, 2007). This broader definition of learning encompasses not only cognitive but also social/emotional and interpersonal skills, motivation and self-regulation, the ability to work with others and benefit from diversity, and the capacity to maintain physical and mental health.

While we do not review the evidence here, we recognize that other supports both within and external to schools, often unavailable to disadvantaged families, including access to pre-kindergarten, health, mental health, dental, social and other services, at both national and community levels, are also crucial to the development and academic achievement of disadvantaged children (Caliber, 2008; First Focus, 2008; Gordon, 2005; Nemours Health and Prevention Services et al., 2008; Rebell & Wolff, in press; Rothstein, 2004).

## **Setting the Stage: A Brief Overview of the Federal Role in Out-of-School Learning**

As we will describe in more detail later in this paper, the federal government has played several extremely important roles in the development of the three out-of-school supports for many years, but has lacked the strategy necessary to ensure that they work with each other and with schools to support learning. Below are the highlights of the federal role in out-of-school learning over the past fifty years.

Federal legislation and policy have signalled and established the importance of out-of-school learning, and provided critical funding for service provision, capacity building, monitoring, and technical assistance. The landmark 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), bringing federal government support to state and local school districts, included provisions for family involvement, signalling and establishing its importance as part of efforts to support equal educational opportunity. Title I and the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) have subsequently included family involvement provisions, including a 1% set-aside for family involvement. The 1994 Improving America's Schools Act created a federal funding stream for after-school, through the authorization of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) within the U.S. Department of Education, which grew from 1997 to 2001 with substantial increases in federal appropriations; 21st CCLCs were reauthorized under NCLB in 2002. There is no specific federal legislation or funding stream for summer learning; however, as is the case with after-school and family involvement, states and communities have put together a number of federal funding streams to support summer learning, including 21st CCLC, Supplemental Educational Services (SES), Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), the National School Lunch and Summer Food Service Programs, and the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). There are two pending pieces of legislation to support summer learning—the Summer Term Education and Programs and Upward Performance (STEP UP) Act and the Summer Service Learning Act—in Congress.

Federal leadership has provided what Cross (2004) characterizes as “leadership dollars,” which in turn leveraged other public and private funding to better meet the growing public and school demand for these services, built community and district capacity, provided professional development, and conducted essential performance monitoring and evaluation. Federal and other private and philanthropic investments in research, evaluation, and performance monitoring have been instrumental in building the knowledge base about the important role these supports play in children's school success and in understanding the educational consequences of disparities in access to them. These investments, as well as the federal commitment to research and accountability, have also created the demand for information about what does and does not work, thereby both supporting continuous improvement and stimulating the development of new initiatives.

However, the above federal policies and programs date from a time when it was assumed that schools alone are where children learn and, as a result, have limited funding. They are marginal rather than central and aligned elements in federal, state, and local school efforts. Further, as numerous analyses of efforts to develop more coordinated education, family, health, and other policies and programs point out, the Congressional legislative committee structure and process, and then the assignment of federal responsibility within and across different executive agencies,

have further marginalized out-of-school learning programs by creating many small, scattered, and siloed out-of-school learning programs and polices (Cross, 2004; Dunkle, 1997; Lovell, 2008; Palanki et al., 1992).

While there have been and continue to be federal efforts to integrate various funding streams, most efforts to date have been relatively small and have not been scaled or sustained.

Communities and schools that want to move out-of-school supports more to the center of their strategies to improve the learning and academic achievement of disadvantaged children must go to extraordinary efforts to locate and blend funding streams and deal with different and sometimes conflicting regulations and monitoring and accountability requirements. While it is allowable to use a variety of funding streams for out-of-school learning programs, such programs are often the first to be cut in difficult budget times and are generally not given the same funding priority as school programs.

Past efforts have marginalized and siloed out-of-school learning opportunities and created major barriers to federal, state, and local efforts to integrate and intentionally align them to complement and reinforce each other across a child's development and school career. As a result, federal out-of-school learning resources are not being used as strategically or efficiently as they could be to support learning. This policy and program fragmentation is especially problematic because there is a growing body of research suggesting that disadvantaged children's early lack of access to these out-of-school supports predicts a sizable percentage of the achievement gap at school entry and then across a child's school career (Alexander, Entwisle & Olson, 2007a; Hart & Risley, 1995; Heckman, 2008; Murnane et al., 2006; Phillips et al., 1998). Further, more and more researchers examining disadvantaged children's school trajectories argue that no single support is sufficient to insure children's school success. Economist and prekindergarten supporter James Heckman, for example, argues in a recent paper that "The advantages gained from effective early interventions are best sustained when they are followed by continued high quality learning experiences" (Heckman, 2008, p.21).

### **Roadmap to This Paper**

Section 1 (p.6) begins the paper with a vision of what a continuous, comprehensive, complementary learning system would look like in a day, a year, and across a child's development from birth through adolescence.

Section 2 (p.10) examines the developmental and intervention evidence for three core out-of-school learning supports: family involvement, after-school, and summer learning programs. We demonstrate that there is a strong research-based case for expanding disadvantaged children's and families' access to these out-of-school learning supports, and suggest that there is likely to be substantial added value in intentionally linking and aligning them with schools and with each other. This section includes specific recommendations for the federal role in sustaining and scaling each out-of-school learning support reviewed.

Section 3 (p.33) synthesizes the evidence-based implementation lessons that show the need to integrate of out-of-school learning supports with each other and with schools.

Section 4 (p.37) concludes the paper with recommendations for the federal role in the future. The recommendations address the urgent need for federal leadership to embrace this broader definition of what disadvantaged children need to succeed; continue to leverage federal funding to increase access to and sustainability of these supports; and spearhead strategic efforts to develop legislation, policies, and other means to enable communities to align out-of-school supports with each other and with schools. This section calls for the federal government to show leadership and pave the way for innovation, recommending a new federal Act to ensure that complementary learning reaches all children.

## 1. A New Vision for Learning

This section opens with a vision of what children and their families need to solve the education “problem” framed at the outset of this paper. It then describes how the proposed solution—complementary learning—could be implemented and offers promising new efforts already underway.

### **THE EDUCATION SOLUTION: CONTINUOUS, COMPREHENSIVE, COMPLEMENTARY LEARNING SUPPORTS**

Marcus is 17 years old. He lives in a public housing development with his younger sister and his mother, Maria, who makes minimum wage cleaning houses. When she was pregnant with Marcus, Maria went to her community health clinic and told her doctor, “I want to be a better parent than my mother. I want my kids to go to college, but I don’t know anybody who went to college. How do I help my kids get there?”

Maria’s doctor referred her to the local community center, which had strong partnerships with the health clinic and the local school district. At the community center, Maria enrolled in a parenting class. Although initially nervous, she liked the instructor and the strategies she learned for helping Marcus learn. She began reading to him and taking him to the children’s museum. She also received home visits from educators at the center, who showed her effective discipline strategies. The biggest benefit of the center, she thought, was meeting other parents to share information, stories, and ambitions for their children.

When Marcus was almost three, a family liaison from the local school district came to the community center to talk to parents about the importance of pre-kindergarten classes and tell parents about the school where their children would attend kindergarten. “We have the same goal you do—to help your kids succeed all the way to college,” she said. After the family liaison’s visit, Maria enrolled Marcus in the center’s Head Start program and began volunteering once a month. The school district’s family liaison became a regular presence, stopping by the center to provide information, answer questions, and refer parents to the school district’s own parenting seminars.

The summer before kindergarten, the family liaison and the school principal led a tour of the local public school and set up a meeting with Maria, Marcus, a staff member from the school’s after-school program, and Marcus’ advisor—another teacher who would advise Marcus throughout his elementary school years. Together, they developed a plan for getting Marcus all the way to college. The plan—they called it a learning compact—explained what each person would do to help Marcus succeed. Every semester for the rest of elementary school, the group would meet to review Marcus’ grades, discuss his progress, and assess whether each person was fulfilling his or her responsibilities.

Maria, who had never had good relationships with her own teachers, quickly warmed to the teachers and other staff. When the principal saw her at the school one morning, he personally invited her to volunteer and she gladly accepted. The principal also told her about the school-based health clinic and Maria began scheduling immunizations and regular visits from Marcus.

After Marcus' (and Maria's!) successful transition to kindergarten, Marcus thrived in elementary school. During one of the learning compact meetings, the after-school director, who had noticed Marcus' talent for singing, encouraged him to sing in the church choir and helped him apply for and win a scholarship to a summer arts program. She and Marcus' reading teacher at school also worked together to help him write songs based on the books he was reading in class.

Before Marcus moved on to middle school, the learning compact team introduced Marcus and Maria to his new middle school team, a process that was repeated before he entered high school. In eighth grade, the team began discussing Marcus' goal of becoming a music professor, including how to apply to and succeed in college. They discussed what Marcus could do after school and during the summers to help achieve his goals. Maria also attended a "financial aid" night cosponsored by the school, local universities, and the after-school recreation program.

Now in the spring of 12<sup>th</sup> grade, Marcus is ready to graduate and has been accepted—with scholarships—at four different colleges. With a lifelong network of learning supports in place, his path to college and career is wide open.

\*Events in this story are inspired by the work of Edmund Gordon on supplementary education, Dennie Palmer Wolf at the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, and Paul Tough of *The New York Times*; The School Transition Study; The Home Visit Forum; schools and teachers nationwide; and local and national programs that provide the kinds of services mentioned here.

## Features of Complementary Learning

To access the learning opportunities and a pathway to educational success as described in our story of Marcus and Maria, Marcus and children like him need a *continuous, comprehensive, and complementary learning system*, the components of which have a shared vision for learning and educational success. The individual services and programs described above already exist, but parents like Maria may find their high expectations for their children frustrated by their lack of experience in navigating the educational system. A piecemeal approach increases the chances that they will fall through the cracks and will not have access to all of the learning supports necessary to maximize success (for example, after-school and summer programs). Maria and Marcus found and followed a pathway to college because their community had intentionally created a complementary learning system to connect the existing stepping stones.

Complementary learning is the idea that a systemic approach, which intentionally integrates both school and out-of-school learning supports, can better ensure that all children have the skills they need to succeed in school and in life. As in Maria and Marcus' community, complementary learning systems require that stakeholders come together to create a system with a set of core features:

A commitment to ensuring access to complementary learning for disadvantaged children and their families. Currently, disadvantaged children and their families have less opportunity to experience complementary learning than their more affluent peers. Thus, they don't experience the rich set of learning opportunities that the research suggests is essential to positive learning and developmental outcomes, thus further widening achievement gaps. This is true for family involvement, where we see differential patterns in involvement based

on socioeconomic factors as well as educator outreach. The same applies to access and participation in after-school and summer learning programs, where we see differences in participation based on socioeconomic status.

A systemic approach to supporting the role of families in learning. Parents who are involved early and throughout the school years have children who are more likely to enter school ready to succeed and to graduate and go to college. Further, families play a critical role in accessing and sustaining participation in a network of quality learning supports. Many families lack the social and political capital necessary even to know about, let alone make good choices in, learning opportunities for their children. Thus, a systemic approach to family involvement is one that helps families understand the value of continuous learning of all kinds, and offers the network of supports necessary for that learning.

Access to an array of quality comprehensive and complementary supports from birth through adolescence. Complementary learning starts at birth and continues through adolescence. Home visiting and early childhood programs set children on a path to school readiness; participation in after-school and summer learning programs affords children and youth access to crucial developmental supports and opportunities that prepare them for later success in life. Health and economic supports are also necessary precursors to children's being prepared to learn. Throughout the child's development, families remain a core out-of-school learning support which should interface with all others.

Focus on a range of academic, social, and behavior skills. From birth through adolescence, access to an array of out-of-school learning supports promotes learning both directly and indirectly, building skills and knowledge as well as the conditions for learning (for example, motivation and engagement, social skills, and health). They help to address achievement gaps and the challenges that living in poverty pose for children's educational and life outcomes and build the skills they need to become successful citizens, parents, and workers.

Complementary learning means that out-of-school supports are aligned with and connected to schools and to each other to maximize learning and developmental outcomes. Across a child's development, aligned and connected supports aid important educational transitions and ensure that children and youth get and stay on pathways to learning and life success.

#### **What is Complementary Learning?**

Complementary learning is the idea that a systemic approach—which intentionally integrates both school and nonschool supports—can best ensure that all children have the skills they need to succeed in school and in life. A complementary learning approach creates a seamless pathway from birth to college, which links and aligns:

- Effective schools
- Supportive families and opportunities for family engagement
- Early childhood programs
- Out-of-school time activities (including sports, arts, mentoring programs, etc.)
- Cultural and community institutions
- Colleges and universities
- Health, social services, and other safety net services

Complementary learning approaches assure that such supports are intentionally connected to maximize efficiency, ensure consistency and smooth transitions, and create a web of opportunity so that children do not fall through the cracks.

For examples of complementary learning, see [www.hfrp.org/complementary-learning](http://www.hfrp.org/complementary-learning)

Key features of alignment include:

- common learning and development goals among all partners
- information systems to ensure that information about students is shared across supports
- shared best practices and professional development opportunities
- shared accountability
- multi-level relationships that cross local and district school leadership
- formalized mechanisms for communication
- shared governance structures

Recognition that there are multiple ways by which localized complementary learning approaches can be implemented. Approaches to implementing complementary learning can and should vary depending on the needs and resources of any given community. Leadership for complementary learning can be housed within a school, a community-based organization, or across a community in the form of education councils, but efforts to develop complementary learning need to be co-constructed among all educators and providers in a community.

### **The Growing Momentum for Complementary Learning**

There are multiple ways to implement a complementary learning approach—and there is a growing national momentum towards doing so. From the broad-based Time, Learning and Afterschool Task Force that produced *A New Day for Learning* ([http://www.edutopia.org/pdfs/AnewDayfor Learning.pdf](http://www.edutopia.org/pdfs/AnewDayforLearning.pdf)), to education leaders such as the signatories to the “Broader, Bolder Approach to Education” statement ([www.boldapproach.org](http://www.boldapproach.org)), to president Barack Obama, there is a palpable movement to educate children and youth in more systemic and aligned ways. This momentum is creating a range of approaches at multiple levels.

At the local level, counties, cities, and neighborhoods are implementing innovative approaches such as the Harlem Children’s Zone (Tough, 2008) and other communities’ efforts to replicate or modify it—and the president has proposed to fund 20 additional zones around the country. Other communities are also creating integrated approaches, such as the Strive initiative in Cincinnati and the Building Bright Futures initiative in Omaha. (For more on-the-ground examples of complementary learning in action, go to <http://www.hfrp.org/complementary-learning>.) At the state level, children’s cabinets and commissions are coordinating services across agencies to serve children and youth more systemically. As these examples of “existence proof” demonstrate, complementary learning approaches can and should vary depending on the needs and resources of their respective communities. The locus of leadership may vary (schools, community-based organizations, cross-community education councils, etc.); the important thing is that it be co-constructed among all educators and providers in a community.

At the federal level, policies and legislation play an important role in enabling such efforts. Yet historically, and moving forward, the work of implementing out-of-school learning has been and will continue to be the responsibility of local schools, districts, and communities, with money from disparate funding streams passing through the states to them. Thus, the role of the federal government in complementary learning is not to implement programs, but rather to enable local innovation, show leadership, support accountability and quality, and use other legislative and

regulatory tools to ensure that complementary learning occurs locally. Some recent federal legislation, such as the Full-Service Community Schools Act and the proposed Education Begins at Home (EBAH) Act, enable states and communities to implement complementary learning efforts that best suit their local needs.

At all levels, both on the ground and in policy infrastructure, a core set of learning supports needs to be in place to create an effective complementary learning system. This paper focuses on the tripod of family involvement, after-school, and summer programs, and describes the policy supports needed to leverage them in order to maximize children’s potential. The next section of this paper provides the evidence that these three essential out-of-school learning supports can have an important impact on learning and development.

## **2. Three Components of Complementary Learning: Family Involvement, After-School, and Summer Learning Supports**

Decades of results across a number of developmental and intervention studies establish a clear warrant for out-of-school learning supports, including after-school and summer learning programs and family involvement in learning. Together with schools, these three supports comprise some of the essential components of a complementary learning system. Parents who are involved early and throughout the school years have children who are more likely to enter school ready to succeed and to graduate and go to college. Participation in after-school and summer learning programs affords children and youth access to crucial developmental supports and opportunities that prepare them for later success in life. From birth through adolescence, access to this array of out-of-school learning supports promotes learning both directly and indirectly, building skills and knowledge as well as the conditions for learning (for example, motivation and engagement, social skills, and health).

For each support reviewed here—after-school and summer learning programs, and family involvement in learning—the paper presents a summary of the most rigorous information available to demonstrate the value of the support to in-school learning, augmented by text boxes with findings from seminal studies. Each section then identifies key issues for policy and implementation, which foreshadow a set of recommendations for the federal role moving forward.

### **A Note on the Evidence Base**

Before presenting the evidence base, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of current developmental and intervention research. Most of the evidence on the benefits of out-of-school learning supports has been generated through non-experimental and quasi-experimental studies that provide strong correlational evidence about benefits. Some of this research is longitudinal, suggesting benefits over time. Across all three out-of-school supports reviewed here, the developmental research methodologies are more rigorous than their intervention counterparts.

Studies for this review were selected to meet key criteria: experimental or well-designed quasi-experimental studies; multi-site interventions with large sample sizes; longitudinal results where possible; meta-analyses which include a range of studies; and results subjected to the scrutiny of

peer review. Also reviewed as part of the evidence base are a handful of seminal qualitative research studies that have contributed a deeper understanding of how to develop and implement specific complementary learning supports. Given our argument that embracing complementary learning leads to a broadened definition of student success, a final criterion was examination of learning outcomes broadly defined to include a range of cognitive, behavioral, and socio-emotional skills.

## **2A. Investing in Family Involvement**

Over 40 years of research show that parenting and family involvement matter for school and life success. Since the 1966 Coleman report *Equality of Educational Opportunity* created a controversy with its finding that families mattered more than schools for disadvantaged children's achievement, the evidence has continued to grow. Recently, the *NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development* reported the striking finding that differences in early parenting practices explained approximately one-third of the achievement gap between black and white children in kindergarten, and that parenting remained a strong predictor of outcomes until at least the sixth grade (Belsky et al., 2007; Murnane et al., 2006). Hundreds of other studies have established a strong developmental warrant for the crucial role of parenting and families from birth through adolescence, and have created a growing evidence base about how to promote family involvement through programs, practices, and policies.

This evidence makes a compelling case for policies that support and enable family involvement. Although there has been a federal role in family involvement for decades, there has not been a commitment to a systemic and sustained approach across ages and in all of the settings where children and youth learn. Below we describe the need and opportunities for such a systemic approach in federal policy, supported by research evidence. We begin with an overview of the current and past federal role in family involvement as context for the movement to a more systemic approach.

### **Federal family involvement policy: Commitment without consistency**

Since the 1960s, there has been a notable and multi-agency commitment to the importance of family involvement in learning (D'Agostino et al., 2001). This commitment is manifested in several pieces of legislation and several federal programs. Title I legislation requires districts to spend 1% of their Title I funds on family involvement activities and includes mandates and opportunities for family involvement at the local level. Under the NCLB Act, underperforming schools are required to include family involvement provisions in their school improvement plans. Several early childhood programs, including Head Start, Early Head Start, and the Even Start family literacy program, include mandates for family involvement, as does the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC afterschool program. Family involvement is also part of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and most federal special education initiatives.

However, to date there has been little monitoring or accountability with regard to these provisions. A study of school improvement plans from five states found that the majority of plans did not include the parent involvement activities that are required by law. Many state education agencies and districts do not "systematically monitor implementation of the plans of schools in improvement" (Speth, Saifer, & Forehand, 2008, p.17). Also, the prevalence of family

involvement provisions in school improvement plans decreased across grade levels: only 18% of high schools included in their written plans activities to help parents prepare their children for post-secondary education.

Furthermore, family involvement has never been consistently or systemically defined across, or even within, agencies and programs. Over time, each political administration has emphasized different forms of family involvement (e.g. parent councils, school-wide parent involvement plans, school choice) and, as a result, the role of parents in educational policy has changed many times since 1965 (Johnson, 1997). The problem remains even within current legislation: NCLB uses the word “parent” or some variation over 650 times (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2002), but still does not present or utilize a focused and consistent definition or role for family involvement in children’s learning.

In addition, little attention is paid to the things families can do at home to support their children’s academic engagement and achievement, despite the research that suggests these types of involvement are most beneficial for learning (D’Agostino et al., 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Federal policy has focused on a “school impact” model (effecting school-level change) rather than a “parent impact” model (effecting change with one’s own child), which has limited federal family involvement policy efforts to boost student achievement (Johnson, 1997). The study of school improvement plans cited above found that only 42% of plans included family involvement activities linked to major school academic goals, and only 25% of plans mentioned activities to help parents encourage learning at home (Speth, Saifer, & Forehand, 2008).

The lack of both a consistent working definition and systematic monitoring for compliance with the law has resulted in what one field leader calls “random acts of parent involvement” (Gill Kressley, 2008). It has been cumbersome and difficult for schools and communities to create consistent family involvement strategies that link early investments (such as Head Start and Early Head Start) with school-aged family involvement efforts to ensure a coherent and consistent approach across the developmental span. Many observers of federal policy conclude, with Christopher Cross, former Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement in the U.S. Department of Education: “While Federal policy has attempted to deal with parent involvement...those efforts have been halfhearted, unfocused, and ineffective” (Cross, 2004, p. 157).

In part because of these trends, there are striking differences in family involvement—both in the opportunities afforded for it and in its enactment—across socioeconomic groups. Numerous studies show that disadvantaged families are significantly less likely to be involved in learning, both at home and in school (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Keith et al., 1998; Kohl, Lengua, & McMahan, 2000). In early childhood, for example, middle class parents use more vocabulary words; they are more likely to read to their children and to believe in the importance of activities such as teaching the alphabet (Lareau, 2003; O’Donnell, 2008). However, because families from all backgrounds report that they *want* to be involved and have high expectations for their children (Epstein, 1995; Henderson & Mapp, 2002), it is important to understand the factors that enable or constrain involvement, particularly when considering the role for federal policy.

Disadvantaged and minority families report receiving less outreach from schools, even though educators report equal outreach to all families (Chen, 2001; National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). The reason for this difference in perception is not clear, but it underlines differences in how families from different backgrounds experience the education system. Disadvantaged families have more logistical and resource challenges, including transportation challenges, inflexible work schedules, and lack of money to provide educational materials and enroll in supplemental learning experiences. In addition, disadvantaged parents are more likely to have had previous negative experiences with schools and are less likely to have the social and cultural capital that is valued by the dominant middle-class culture and reinforced by educational institutions (Gordon, 2005). Clearly, financial, cultural, and social capital all influence involvement (Lareau, 1987, 2003).

Given all of these political and social trends, it is essential to clarify and focus the federal role with respect to family involvement in children's education. Our review of the research shows that family involvement is a key resource for and predictor of children's school success, and highlights the critical issues that must be addressed to create a more systemic definition of family involvement, as well as a federal strategy for promoting it. In particular, the research underscores the need to define family involvement as a responsibility shared by families, schools, and communities. This requires an ongoing and comprehensive approach.

### **Family Involvement Makes a Difference in Learning: The Evidence**

Over forty years of research show that families who are involved early and throughout the school years have children who are more likely to enter school ready to succeed and to graduate and go to college. As we describe below, there is a strong developmental warrant for the crucial role of families from birth through adolescence across the settings of home, school, and community, and a growing evidence base about how to promote family involvement through programs and policies.

#### ***Parenting affects school readiness and achievement across ages.***

Parenting is a powerful predictor of both school readiness and long-term educational trajectories. Beginning at birth, children whose parents are supportive and nurturing, who read to them and use more complex language, and who create a stimulating home environment, have better cognitive and social/emotional skills. These skills allow such students to enter school more prepared than their peers whose parents are not involved in learning, and to succeed in the classroom (Weiss, Caspe & Lopez, 2006).

In their seminal research, Hart and Risley (1995) found that language use in the home has a striking influence on children's vocabularies—and that influence varies across socioeconomic groups. Children from professional families heard an average of 2,153 words per hour, while children from working class and welfare families heard an average of 1,251 and 616 words, respectively. At age three, the difference in children's vocabularies was staggering: an average of 1,100 words for middle class children versus 750 and 500 words for children from working class and welfare families, respectively. Recent research on socio-economic differences in summer library use found that low-income children received less learning assistance from accompanying adults such as parents, grandparents, and caregivers during their library visits. As a result, compared to their more advantaged peers they selected print materials with less information and

thus were exposed to many fewer words, and they were more likely to use computers for entertainment than for learning visits (Celano & Neuman, 2008).

Even more striking, longitudinal research shows that the effects of early parenting persist throughout the school years (Belsky et al., 2007). Looking across age groups, research reviews by the Educational Testing Service have found that family factors and the home environment account for two-thirds of the differences across states in achievement tests, and that for correlates to the achievement gap, 8 out of 14 are related to the family and home environment (Barton, 2003; Barton, Coley, & Educational Testing Service, 2007).

A range of intervention studies have shown success in boosting family involvement and children's learning. In early childhood, trained parent educators from family support and home visiting programs provide services that include parent training, health services, and referrals to social service agencies. Many of these programs aim to help parents support their children's learning. A meta-analysis of 60 home visiting programs found that home visiting was associated with modest but potentially important changes, including improved parenting and better cognitive, social, and emotional outcomes for children (Sweet & Applebaum, 2004). Rigorous experimental studies of one successful program, the Nurse-Family Partnership, found a range of lasting positive effects on the parenting of participating teenage mothers (Olds, 2006). Research on the importance of parenting for children's learning suggests that programs like this may also impact school success.

Mixed programs, which combine preschool services for children with home visits to parents, have proven particularly successful (Karoly, Kilburn, & Cannon, 2005; Love et al., 2005; Reynolds et al., 2007; Schweinhart et al., 2005). Such programs allow educators to reinforce messages about learning and parental involvement both at the school and in the home. It is worth noting that the highly effective Perry Preschool Program, on which many current preschool programs and policies are based, included a weekly home visit to families (see **text box** for more about this and other successful programs).

### ***Family-school relationships and involvement promote learning.***

When their parents are involved in learning and out-of-school activities, elementary, middle, and high school students do better in school, in out-of-school settings like afterschool and summer programs, and in social interactions with their peers. Parents' roles vary over time to meet their children's changing developmental needs. At all ages, however, effective involvement is ongoing and systemic. It is not a

#### **Key Findings from Family Involvement Interventions in Early Childhood**

The national evaluation of *Early Head Start* (for children aged 0 to 3 and their families) found that children who received both home- and center-based services made greater language gains than a control group.

A large longitudinal study of *The Chicago Child-Parent Centers* (CPC) program, which incorporates a variety of family involvement activities, found that that program increased family involvement in elementary school, which in turn increased achievement through high school.

*The Perry Preschool Program*, which served disadvantaged African American 3- and 4-year-olds in Michigan from 1962–1967, included daily preschool classes and a weekly 90-minute home visit by a child's teacher. A longitudinal study with a control group has found numerous positive outcomes of the program into adulthood. By age 40, former Perry preschoolers demonstrated greater percentages of employment and higher rates of high school completion, either through a regular high school or an adult education program, than the control group.

one-time event, but a suite of things that parents do on a day-to-day basis.

Family involvement at any age is most effective when it is directly related to students' learning. Effective strategies include regular and two-way communication between families and schools, supportive and developmentally appropriate involvement in homework, maintaining high expectations for education and career, and ongoing parent-child discussion about education (D'Agostino et al., 2001). In contrast, research suggests that forms of involvement *not* directly tied to learning—such as volunteering, fundraising, and committees—are least associated with academic outcomes (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Several meta-analyses find that family involvement has statistically significant relationships with student outcomes (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007). When parents are involved in these ways, their children have higher achievement (grades, test scores, passing rates, completion of course credits), better academic adjustment (better attendance, pursuit of more challenging courses, greater chances of graduating, greater enrollment in post-secondary education, improved school work habits), and more positive attitudes and motivation.

Furthermore, numerous studies and meta-analyses illustrate the benefits of family involvement for low-income children, who are, on average, at greater academic risk than their more-advantaged peers. In fact, disadvantaged children appear to benefit even more from family involvement than their more-advantaged peers (Dearing et al., 2004; Schulting, Malone & Dodge, 2005). These effects persist over time and establish long-term patterns.

Although there have been few large-scale evaluations of the many types of programs that promote family involvement in learning during the elementary and middle school years, meta-analyses provide evidence that existing small-scale programs can be effective (Jeynes 2003, 2005, 2007). The Campbell Collaboration conducted a meta-analysis of 18 random assignment evaluations of programs in which parents were directly engaged in learning activities with their children. The meta-analysis found that family involvement programs had a significant positive effect on achievement (overall effect size = .45), particularly for reading achievement (effect size = .41). The authors report that this positive effect has been evident for more than 30 years (Nye, Turner, & Schwartz, 2006).

Further, several studies show that intervention programs can increase both teachers' outreach practices and families' likelihood of involvement (Epstein, 2005). Such programs are clearly warranted, because parents are more likely to be involved when teachers and administrators reach out to them and invite them (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler 1997; Sheldon, 2005; Simon, 2004).

***Family involvement creates smoother transitions.***

Educational transitions (e.g., from preschool to kindergarten and from middle to high school) can be times of vulnerability for many children and youth. Family involvement can bridge these transitions and ensure that children experience continuity and succeed in school. The *School Transition Study* found that families who were involved during preschool were more likely to visit their child's kindergarten classroom and more likely to network with other parents in the kindergarten class (Kreider, 2002).

Outreach from educators may be especially important during transitions. According to the national *Early Childhood Longitudinal Study*, children have higher achievement at the end of kindergarten when schools reach out to their families and help facilitate the transition from preschool or home to kindergarten (Schulting, Malone, & Dodge, 2005). Students whose schools implemented the mean number of transition practices (3.4 out of 7) had achievement scores that were .10 standard deviation higher than those of students who were offered no transition practices. Furthermore, low- and middle-income children benefited most from these outreach practices, demonstrating an increase of .03 standard deviations in achievement for every additional outreach practice from the school.

***Family involvement paves the path to college.***

Families play an enormously important role in whether their children graduate from high school and attend college. This role begins in the early years, with parents' expectations for and discussions with children, and continues throughout childhood and adolescence through family-school communication and other means.

When parents communicate with teachers, they know more about school policies and practices, and their children's academic and social progress. When parents have this knowledge, their children are more likely to enroll in challenging courses, complete them, and graduate. In a study of high school dropouts, over 70% of the teenagers surveyed said that more communication between parents and schools might have prevented them from dropping out (Bridgeland, DiIulio & Morrison, 2006). Furthermore, adolescents are more likely to go to college when their parents communicate high expectations and discuss college plans with them. Meta-analyses find that parents' educational expectations have the strongest relationships to student outcomes (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2005, 2007).

Adolescents are also more likely to go to college when their parents know how to navigate the educational system and college application process (Trusty, 1999). Based in part on these findings, many programs have been developed to promote family involvement in college preparation. Although few of these programs have evaluated the impact on students, evaluations do show that the programs can help parents feel more knowledgeable about and comfortable with the college application process (Auerbach, 2004; Gándara & Moreno, 2002).

***Family involvement can facilitate access to learning opportunities.***

Family involvement can also help children access and benefit from after-school and summer programs and other learning experiences. A *Harvard Family Research Project* study found that adolescents were more likely to participate in after-school programs if their parents were emotionally supportive and involved in learning (Simpkins et al., in press). In contrast, youth whose families were not involved in their lives were least likely to participate. Given findings like these, it is not surprising that engaging families has been identified as one of the most promising strategies for recruiting youth into such programs (Little & Lauver, 2005).

Program evaluations show that after-school and summer programs also provide additional opportunities for parents to be involved with their children's learning. They can even build bridges between families and schools, minimizing some of the common barriers to involvement

at school, such as schedule conflicts, feelings of intimidation around school personnel, and language and cultural differences from teachers. A national evaluation of the *21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers* program found that family involvement in after-school, weekend, and summer programs increased family involvement in school and at home (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2003).

### **Family Involvement Policy Moving Forward: What Needs to Happen Next**

All of the research summarized above offers an important conclusion and a direction for future federal policy: *family involvement must be a systemic and sustained commitment that occurs across time, spans many settings, and requires shared responsibility from all parties.*

In a systemic family involvement approach, families, schools, and communities must all engage in a set of activities that include (but are not limited to) those described in the **text box**. Families should do the kinds of things Maria did with Marcus. For their part, schools and communities should offer the opportunities and resources that support these activities, as did Maria and Marcus' community center and schools. Policies play an essential role in supporting, enabling, and building accountability for these opportunities.

As McLaughlin and Shields (1987) note, federal mandates alone will not create a genuine commitment to family involvement where it matters most: in schools, districts, and communities. However, federal policy *does* have an essential role to play in establishing the definition of and priorities for family involvement, as well as building the leadership, resources, and support to enable communities to work effectively with families. In all of these areas, federal policy should espouse a consistent and comprehensive definition of family involvement, and a systemic approach.

The following are specific recommendations for the federal role in moving toward a more systemic and effective family involvement approach:

- 1) *Develop a clear definition of family involvement* that focuses on how families can support their children's learning, especially at home and in the community, and employ this definition across federal agencies and legislation to promote a more consistent approach. Engage families in helping to create this definition and apply it across policies and programs.

#### **Systemic Family Involvement**

Families, schools, and communities all play an active and essential role in ensuring systemic involvement—and policies play an essential role in enabling or constraining them. Roles should include (but not be limited to) the following:

**Families** should read with their children and engage in other learning activities at home, limit TV and "screen time," respond warmly to their children but also set limits, communicate regularly with schools and other learning institutions, maintain high educational expectations, help with homework in supportive ways, help their children navigate transitions such as those to kindergarten and college, and help their children access afterschool, summer, and other learning opportunities.

In order for families to fulfill these roles, **schools and communities** must provide accessible and understandable information about: school policies, academic standards and expectations, their child's progress in school, how to help learning at home, how to support preparation for college and career, and how to access high-quality afterschool and summer opportunities. They should also provide opportunities for families to be involved in decision-making about their child and the school as a whole, including the opportunity to shape the school's family involvement plans and policies.

- 2) *Leverage the existing federal commitment to family involvement (see box next page) and reshape it to emphasize the need for a continuous family involvement pathway from birth through high school. Opportunities to move beyond “random acts of parent involvement” include (but should not be limited to) the following: Modify Title I, Sec. 1118 to establish a framework for involvement across ages and clarify expectations and opportunities for districts and schools to use Title I money for family involvement. Build bridges between early childhood programs and legislation (such as Head Start and Early Head Start) with Title I legislation to enable a smooth transition to school. Strengthen the family involvement provisions in 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC legislation and provide incentives for collaboration between Title I and 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC family involvement activities.*

**Key Family Involvement Resources and Legislation**

*Title I* legislation requires schools to spend 1% of their Title I funds on parent involvement activities.

The *Keeping PACE* (Parents and Communities Engaged) Act, a proposed amendment to NCLB introduced in the U.S. Senate in 2007, allows schools use such Title I funds to hire Parent and Community Outreach Coordinators.

The *Education Begins At Home Act* (EBAH), reintroduced in 2008, provides funding to states for community-based home visiting programs that inform and support parents of young children so that they can be effectively involved in learning from an early age.

*Parental Information and Resource Centers* (PIRCs) provide training, technical assistance, and capacity-building at the state, district, and local levels.

- 3) *Commit to systems for monitoring and tracking districts’ and schools’ family involvement efforts, and combine them with real accountability for district and school personnel. Leverage the new interest among some superintendents and other school leaders to build accountability for outreach and engagement with families (Crew & Dyja, 2007).*

- 4) *Enable communities to create an aligned family involvement pathway across ages and settings by bringing together stakeholders who represent all age groups, institutions, and agencies. Create mechanisms that “set the table” for these parties to establish a common vision and approach. Such mechanisms could include competitive priorities for partnerships in federal grants (e.g. the recent Full-Service Community Schools Act); requirements for partnerships across ages and grade levels (e.g. EBAH); and granting waivers from existing regulations to allow flexible and pooled funding and shared governance across agencies and efforts.*

**Future Directions for Family Involvement Policy**

Develop a clear definition across legislation.

Leverage and link existing investments in family involvement to create a broader pathway.

Commit to systems for monitoring and tracking.

Enable communities to create an aligned family involvement pathway.

Create and strengthen mechanisms to build capacity in schools and communities.

- 5) *Create and strengthen mechanisms and funding to build capacity among schools and communities to engage families. Address the glaring lack of pre- and in-service training for educators using mechanisms such as the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act and Title II of ESEA. Further build capacity by*

supporting the Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs), which are an underfunded but promising effort to provide technical assistance to schools and communities in every state and U.S. territory.

All of these actions require a commitment to working in a more aligned and systemic way, not just with schools, but also with after-school and summer programs, communities, and safety net services such as health.

## **2B. Investing in After-School Programs**

After-school programs have existed for over a century, responding at various times to the need for adult supervision, risk prevention, and skill building. The 1970s marked a resurgence of demand for after-school programs in response to growth in maternal employment (Vandell & Shumow, 1999); after-school, then called school-age child care, was seen as a solution to the “problem” of working mothers. Today, after-school programs are seen as a vital opportunity and resource for learning and development, with over 6 million children and youth participating (Afterschool Alliance, 2004) and many more families—especially from low-income and minority groups—reporting unmet demand for high-quality and accessible programming (Duffet et al., 2004). Increased investments in after-school programs over the past decade have resulted in a substantial evidence base about the academic, social, health, and other benefits, and have created a strong case for further investment.

### **Federal After-school Policy: Increased Focus on Learning and Development**

The federal role in after-school really took hold in 1994, when the Improving America’s Schools Act created a federal funding stream for after-school within the Department of Education. In 1998 came significant increases in federal appropriations for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC) and the historic public-private partnership with the C. S. Mott Foundation to support the capacity of programs to deliver quality services. Not coincidentally, by 1998 voters reported seeing after-school programs as venues where children could master skills, receive tutoring, and prepare for a productive future.

The 2002 reauthorization of the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC legislation narrowed the focus of these programs from a community learning center model, where all members of the community benefited from access to school resources such as teachers, computer labs, gymnasiums

### **21<sup>st</sup> CCLC**

Begun in 1997, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative is the only federal funding source dedicated exclusively to after-school programs. The *No Child Left Behind Act* reauthorized 21st CCLC in 2002, transferring the administration of the grants from the U.S. Department of Education to the state education agencies. Each state receives funds based on its share of Title I funding for low-income students. Funds are also allotted to outlying areas and the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

21<sup>st</sup> CCLC funds can be used to support school-year as well as summer learning programs. Since 1997, the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grants program has grown from \$1 million to almost \$1.1 (over one) billion, now providing over 3,000 grants to approximately one and one-half million children attending about 9,600 after-school programs nationwide.

While results of its national evaluation were mixed (see below) some of the strongest criticisms of some of findings were that the outcomes being measured were much narrower than the grantees had to focus on. Many local evaluations of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC indicate student progress and public support for the program remains high; while funding for the program reached a plateau of approximately \$1 billion for a number of years, it was increased by almost \$100 million in 2008. The 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program is actually authorized to be funded at a level 2.5 times higher than Congress has provided.

and classrooms, to an after-school program model that provides academic enrichment and additional services to complement in-school learning, as well as literacy and related educational development services to families of children in the program. Over time, then, the multiple benefits of participation in after-school programs have been realized—and adult supervision, risk prevention, and skill building are now coupled with an increased emphasis, especially in the past five years, on the role of after-school and summer learning programs in addressing the problems of under-performing students, and more broadly of narrowing the learning gap.

While early after-school research and evaluation studies were primarily descriptive, focusing on issues of implementation, systems-building, and sustainability, knowledge investments in the past ten years, including those funded by the federal Department of Education, have increasingly focused on studies that examine academic and behavioral outcomes for participants, as well as the programmatic features that contribute to positive outcomes. These investments make a strong case for the benefits of after-school, and while the field is limited in its capacity to make causal claims about the effectiveness of participation in after-school programs,<sup>1</sup> the evidence from the best available research in the after-school arena provides a compelling case that participation in well-implemented after-school programs can support a range of learning and developmental outcomes.

### **After-School Programs Make a Difference: The Evidence**

Investments in research and evaluation have emerged against the backdrop of increasing commitment on the part of the federal government to supporting and sustaining after-school programs, primarily through its 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grants program. While the evidence base reviewed includes more than just the small federal investments in after-school research, the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grants program spawned new money, new programs, and new research and evaluation studies. In addition to the studies conducted of 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs directly, many other after-school evaluations conducted in the past decade, including those cited in this paper, include programs that receive 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC funding as one of many blended funding sources they have leveraged to support their work. As such, the federal role for research has been indirect, but influential. Below is the evidence that investments, both public and private, have the potential to benefit school-aged children and youth. In sum, the evidence indicates that after-school is an important learning environment that can address some of the educational inequities which currently exist, and that participation in well-implemented programs can support academic, social/emotional, prevention, and health outcomes.

#### ***After-school programs promote youth development***

In the United States, over 50% of school-aged children's waking hours are spent outside of school (Larson & Verma, 1999). Historically, how best to use this time has been the topic of debate, but the past decade has seen convergence in opinion: out-of-school time offers opportunities to complement in-school learning and development and expose children to experiences they do not have access to during the school day. Researchers and practitioners alike assert that in addition to families, peers, and schools, high-quality, organized out-of-school time activities have the potential to support and promote youth development. Such activities (a) situate youth in safe environments; (b) prevent youth from engaging in delinquent activities; (c)

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<sup>1</sup> For example, in the 2006 Campbell Collaborative meta-analysis of after-school program evaluations, only five studies met the strict criteria for inclusion (see Zief, Lauver & Maynard, 2006).

teach youth general and specific skills, beliefs, and behaviors; and (d) provide opportunities for youth to develop relationships with peers and mentors (National Research Council & Institute of Medicine, 2002). In fact, there is increasing evidence that youth participation in quality out-of-school activities influences their current outcomes, which, in turn, impact outcomes into adulthood. In their analysis of three longitudinal data sets, Gambone, Klem, and Connell (2003) found that exposure to complementary learning supports and opportunities in middle childhood and early adolescence (such as supportive relationships with adults, challenging and engaging activities, and meaningful involvement and decision-making) was a significant predictor of outcomes through a person's early twenties.

Further, researchers posit that participation in structured leisure activities such as after-school programs provides the optimum venue to experience these critical supports and opportunities. Larson and colleagues conducted a study that examined the affective and cognitive states of youth aged 10-15 to determine which kind of context elicited the highest states of intrinsic motivation and cognitive challenge. Across the three conditions examined—school, unstructured leisure time, and structured leisure time, such as participation in after-school and sports and recreation programs—the context that elicited the highest motivation and the highest cognitive challenge was structured leisure time (Larson, 2000).

The developmental research concludes that after-school programs are important developmental contexts for children and youth. The after-school program intervention research presented below is situated within this larger category of developmental research on organized activities as crucial developmental supports for children and youth.

### ***After-school programs can address some of the educational challenges of poverty for children and youth***

Many children and youth in poverty either do not have access to strong educational institutions or “are not well served by the structure of our current educational system” (TLA Task Force, 2007, p.11). Low-income children often face schools with fewer resources in a school system that can perpetuate class differences (Sawhill, 2006). High rates of students dropping out in urban areas also suggest that the school system is not working for scores of youth (Swanson, 2008).<sup>2</sup> These youth subsequently earn less as adults than their counterparts who finish high school, and also are at a higher risk for poverty (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2006, 2007). There are several ways that out-of-school time can help address some of the educational challenges of poverty for children and youth:

- After-school opportunities can reconnect youth to quality learning opportunities and to learning itself and keep youth engaged in school. For many children and youth, the educational settings provided by after-school programs have been an incredibly important context for learning and development (McLaughlin, 2000; NRC & IOM, 2002). After-school programs can help students tap into different types of educational resources and environments that might be more relevant to their needs and might help them stay connected to school.

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<sup>2</sup> On average, 60% of urban high school students finish their degrees; this proportion falls to just over 50% of high school students in the main school districts of the 50 largest cities (Swanson, 2008).

- After-school opportunities can help youth practice softer social and interpersonal skills and gain from positive youth development models (McLaughlin, Irby & Langman, 1994; NRC & IOM, 2002). The amount of time spent in after-school enrichment activities has been correlated with some positive measures of adjustment in children (Posner & Vandell, 1999). Well-run programs have also been shown to help students develop personal and social skills, including positive feelings, attitudes, and behaviors (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007).
- After-school opportunities can give youth more access to environments that support academic achievement, particularly in the current higher-stakes educational environment. After-school activities have been associated with academic gains for disadvantaged or at-risk youth (Lauer et al., 2006; Mahoney, Lord, & Carryl, 2005b).<sup>3</sup> They can also contribute to longer-term educational success. Vulnerable adolescents who participate in certain combinations of school clubs, sports, volunteering, and other “positive activities” have been more likely to enroll in college, whereas vulnerable youth who were working or spending time hanging out had lower rates of college enrollment (Peck et al., 2008).

***After-school programs can support educational attainment and achievement***

After-school programs can impact learning and academic success in a number of ways.

Relative to participation in other after-school arrangements (such as self care), participation can result in less disciplinary action; lower dropout rates; better academic performance in school, including better grades and test scores; greater on-time promotion; improved homework completion; and improved work habits (Little, Wimer & Weiss, 2008). Three studies in particular illustrate this point: *The Evaluation of Enhanced Academic Instruction in After-school Programs* (Black et al., 2008) and *The Study of Promising After-School Programs* (Vandell, Reisner & Pierce, 2007) (see text box), and the *2003 evaluation of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Centers* (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2003).

**Key Findings on the Academic Impact of After-School Programs**

In 2008, results from the *Evaluation of Enhanced Academic Instruction in After-School Programs*, a two-year intervention and random assignment evaluation of adapted models of regular school-day math and reading instruction in after-school settings, commissioned by the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance at the U.S. Department of Education, was released. First year implementation findings revealed that students in the enhanced programs experience more targeted instruction. Overall, this resulted in significant gains for math but not reading. These findings suggest that participation in an after-school program that intentionally targets specific skills may lead to positive impacts on learning, but results of the second year of implementation are needed in order to make summary statements.

A two-year longitudinal *Study of Promising After-School Programs* examined the effects of participation in quality after-school programs among almost 3,000 youth in 35 elementary and middle school after-school programs located in 14 cities and 8 states. Findings for 2007 from that study indicate that of the elementary and middle school students who participated in high-quality after-school programs, alone or in combination with other activities, across two years, the elementary school students who *regularly attended* the high-quality after-school programs (alone or in combination with other activities) *across two years* demonstrated significant gains in standardized math test scores, compared to their peers who were routinely unsupervised after school hours. It is important to note that this study found regular participation in after-school programs to be associated with improvements in work habits and task persistence, which in turn, may have contributed to the academic gains.

<sup>3</sup> Studies of “vulnerable” and “at-risk” youth are included here because those terms are often used with low SES (among other attributes) as well as risk factors associated with poverty.

The national study of the *21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers program* is an older, but important, study on the impact of after-school. Released in 2003, that study, which employed both experimental and quasi-experimental designs, showed mixed findings related to an after-school program's impact on student achievement as measured by grades and SAT-9 test scores, but it demonstrated some impact on school-related measures of success, such as attendance and college aspirations (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2003). While the 2003 presidential administration found the findings "disappointing" and attempted to use them to justify budget cuts, the evaluation was an important turning point in federal investments in research and evaluation, since it led to the realization that evaluating program outcomes necessitates also evaluating and supporting program implementation. The evaluation was criticized by a number of researchers for narrowly focusing on certain outcomes which the grantees may not have been attempting to impact. Subsequent federal investments in after-school research, such as the *Evaluation of Enhanced Academic Instruction*, have attempted both to better understand issues of implementation and to establish outcomes that are aligned with the goals of the program.

Several other studies and meta-analyses confirm this same message: after-school programs *can* improve academic achievement (Granger & William T. Grant Foundation, 2008). A 2006 meta-analysis by Lauer and colleagues found small but statistically significant effects on both reading and math across the 35 studies of out-of-school time educational interventions (Lauer et al., 2006). Dozens of studies of after-school programs and initiatives repeatedly underscore the powerful impact of supporting a range of positive learning outcomes, including academic achievement, by affording children and youth opportunities to learn and practice new skills through hands-on, experientially based learning in project-based after-school programs which complement, but do not replicate, in-school learning.

***After-school programs can promote social, prevention, and wellness outcomes which contribute to in-school success***

A broadened definition of student success is necessary in 21<sup>st</sup> century society, a definition that goes beyond "the three Rs" and includes the development of skills such as effective communications skills; the ability to develop and sustain interpersonal relationships at school, at work, and at home; the ability to solve complex

**Key Findings on the Social/Emotional Impacts of After-School Programs**

*The Durlak and Weisberg meta-analysis.* Youth who participate in after-school programs improve significantly in three major areas: feelings and attitudes, indicators of behavioral adjustment, and school performance. Further, they found that positive impacts on academic, prevention, and developmental outcomes were concentrated in the programs that utilized strategies characterized as *sequenced* (using a sequenced set of activities designed to achieve skill development objectives), *active* (using active forms of learning to help youth develop skills), *focused* (program components devoted to developing personal or social skills), and *explicit* (targeting of specific personal or social skills). Moreover, **the researchers found that, as a group, programs missing any of these four characteristics did not achieve positive results.**

*The Study of Promising After-School Programs.* In the elementary school sample, Program Only and Program Plus students posted significant gains in teachers' reports of students' social skills with peers. Program Only and Program Plus students also posted significant reductions in aggressive behaviors with peers. Reductions in elementary students' reports of misconduct (e.g., skipping school, getting into fights) over the two-year period were reported by the Program Only and Program Plus groups, relative to unsupervised students. In the middle school sample, reductions in misconduct over the two-year period were reported by Program Plus and Program Only students, relative to the Low Supervision group.

problems; and the development of a strong sense of self. Many of the studies which have found academic gains through after-school programs have also found gains in other developmental domains (Little, Wimer & Weiss, 2008; Granger & William T. Grant Foundation, 2008). Specifically, after-school programs have demonstrated the ability to impact social/emotional, prevention, and wellness outcomes, which in turn support academic success.

Social/emotional outcomes. Numerous after-school programs are focused on improving youth social and developmental outcomes, such as decreased behavioral problems; improved social and communication skills and/or relationships with others (peers, parents, teachers); increased self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-efficacy; lower levels of depression and anxiety; development of initiative; and improved feelings and attitudes toward self and school. In their *meta-analysis of after-school programs' impacts*, Durlak and Weisberg reviewed rigorous evidence<sup>4</sup> from studies of 73 programs that attempted to promote personal and social skills. Results found that youth who participate in after-school programs improve significantly in three major areas: feelings and attitudes, indicators of behavioral adjustment, and school performance. In addition to academic gains, the *Study of Promising After-School Programs* (described in the **text box previous page**) also observed that participation produced positive impacts on social/emotional outcomes.

Crime, Drug, and Sex Prevention outcomes. The hours from three to six o'clock in the evening present several potential hazards to a young person's development. They are the hours associated with the peak time for juvenile crime and juvenile victimization and the hours when teens aged 16-17 are most likely to be in or cause a car crash (Fight Crime Invest in Kids, 2000). Furthermore, based on a survey of 2,000 high school students looking at the relationship between after-school supervision and sexual activity, the American Academy of Pediatrics found that 56% of the youth surveyed reported being home for four or more hours unsupervised after school. Youth who were unsupervised for 30 or more hours per week were more likely to be sexually active than those who were left alone for five hours a week or less. In addition, those left unsupervised for more than five hours per week had more sexually transmitted diseases, particularly the boys (Cohen et al., 2002).

At a minimum, then, participation in an after-school program gets children and youth off the streets and under supervision, and potentially prevents some risky behaviors. Beyond a safe haven, however, research and evaluation studies have demonstrated the positive impact of participation on a range of prevention outcomes, including avoidance of drug and alcohol use, decreases in delinquency and violent behavior, increased knowledge of safe sex, avoidance of sexual activity, and reduction in juvenile crime. For example, a longitudinal study of the effect of participation in *LA's BEST* programs on juvenile crime found that participation was significantly related to lower incidences of juvenile crime. Researchers estimated that this translates into an average saving to society of \$2.50 for every \$1.00 invested in the program (Goldschmidt, Huang & Chinen, 2007).

Health and Wellness outcomes. After-school programs are viewed as one of many places that can tackle the growing problem of obesity among our nation's children and youth. Startling new statistics reveal that by 2010 almost 50% of America's children will be obese; further, almost two-thirds of American children currently engage in little or no physical activity (Afterschool

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<sup>4</sup> The researchers included only studies that employed a control group as part of the design.

Alliance, 2006). While after-school programs can't promise to reduce body mass index (the common measure for obesity) they can contribute to a range of positive health outcomes, such as better food choices, increased physical activity, increased knowledge of nutrition and health practices, reduction in BMI, improved blood pressure, and improved body image, which can result in healthier lifestyles and increased knowledge about nutrition and exercise. For example, *The Yale Study of Children's After-School Time*, including over 650 youth at 25 after-school programs in Connecticut, found that youth who participated in after-school programs were more likely than non-participants to experience reductions in obesity, after accounting for a variety of differences between participants and non-participants (Mahoney, Lord & Carryl, 2005a).

**After-School Policy Moving Forward: What Needs to Happen Next**

Public opinion, a solid evidence base, and the legislative mandates of 2002 have created the current federal landscape for after-school in 2008 and placed after-school squarely in the middle of education reform debates as one of the key ingredients for supporting school success. The current federal landscape, combined with a solid evidence base about “what works,” offers promising future directions for the federal role in after-school. These are presented below.

- 1) *Stabilize and restructure existing funding streams such as SES and 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC.* Today, there are numerous opportunities for federal support for youth programs in general. In fact, a 2007 guide to federal funding for youth programming lists over 100 federal funding sources from 10 federal agencies, each valuing investments in after-school and youth programming for their own agency goals (Dobbins-Harper & Bhat, 2007).<sup>5</sup> Today federal funding specifically for after-school programs includes (1) a dedicated funding stream (21<sup>st</sup> CCLC), which clearly is mandated to support student success, (2) other funds within NCLB that can be used to support after-school learning such as Supplemental Educational Services as part of Title I, and (3) funds external to NCLB Child Care and Development Funds, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, and Department of Justice funding, which support child care and prevention. However, the numerous funding streams available for after-school are unstable and often temporary. For example, resources for SES are allocated to support schools in need of improvement, but once a school moves out of this status, after-school programs no longer are able to access these much-needed funds for sustainability.

<b>Future Directions for After-School Policy</b>
Stabilize and restructure existing funding streams such as SES and 21 <sup>st</sup> CCLC.
Fully fund existing programs at their authorized levels.
Develop capacity at state and local levels to ensure quality.
Provide incentives for after-school-school partnerships.
Consider investments in after-school as part of a whole-day/whole-year strategy for partnering with schools and summer programming to support year-long learning.

Currently, SES operates like a voucher program in which eligible students can use SES funds to access tutoring support after school. This is not a sustainable strategy for after-

<sup>5</sup> The 10 federal agencies are: Corporation for National and Community Service; Department of Agriculture; Department of Education; Department of Health and Human Services; Department of Housing and Urban Development; Department of Justice; Department of Labor; Department of the Interior; National Endowment for the Arts; Department of Defense.

school programs, because the money follows the student, not the program, thereby rendering fragile the funding base for the small set of after-school programs even eligible to provide SES services. Moving forward, if SES remains a core part of education reform, then it could be made to include more after-school programs by changing the structure from reimbursement to a different, more stable funding mechanism. SES could also be reworked to support tutoring within the framework of complementary learning initiatives.

- 2) *Fully fund programs such as 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC at their authorized levels to ensure that they reach those who would most benefit from participation in them.* Supply for after-school programs does not meet current demand, with recent polling data indicating that some 14 million children go home alone to no adult supervision some afternoons per week (Afterschool Alliance, 2004). Access to after-school remains inequitable. A survey of after-school programs reveals a consistent pattern of “winners and losers” with significant demographic differences in activity participation across a range of non-school supports including sports, school clubs, and school-based and community-based after-school programs.<sup>6</sup> Highlights from *analyses of two nationally representative data sets by the Harvard Family Research Project* reveal that children and youth whose families have higher incomes and more education are the “winners,” and their less-advantaged peers are the “losers.” Specifically, children and youth whose families have higher incomes and more education are more likely to participate in after-school activities; do so with greater frequency during the week; participate in a greater number of different activities within a week or a month; and are more likely to participate in enrichment programs. Their disadvantaged peers are more likely to participate in academic tutoring programs, thus not reaping the benefits associated with enrichment experiences (Bouffard et al., 2006; Pederson & Seidman, 2005). These findings are particularly troublesome given the many studies and research syntheses concluding that youth experience greater gains across a wide variety of outcomes if they participate with greater frequency (more days per week) in a more sustained manner (over a number of years) (American Youth Policy Forum, 2006; Chaskin & Baker, 2006; Moore & Zaff, 2002; Simpkins-Chaput, Little, & Weiss, 2004). Given the pervasive achievement gaps among disadvantaged children and youth, coupled with the opportunity that participation in a well-implemented after-school program affords to promote learning, it is essential that 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC, the only dedicated funding stream for after-school, be funded at its authorized levels.
  
- 3) *Develop capacity at state and local levels to ensure program quality.* It is important to note a common thread across many of the studies that examined academic impact: balancing academic support with a variety of engaging, fun, and structured extracurricular or co-curricular activities that promote youth development in a variety of real-world contexts appears to support and improve academic performance.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, programs that expect to impact academic outcomes need to be intentional about doing so and align their

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<sup>6</sup> This information is based on research conducted by the Harvard Family Research Project on the contextual predictors of participation in out-of-school time. For a complete description of the study and its methodology, visit the HFRP website at: [http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/ost\\_participation.html](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/ost_participation.html)

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, evaluations of TASC, LA’s BEST, and The Study of Promising After-School Programs, all profiled in the Harvard Family Research Project Research and Evaluation Database. Available at: <http://www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time/ost-database-bibliography>

programming accordingly. Targeted instruction, such as that implemented in the *Evaluation of Enhanced Academic Instruction*, and intentional skill building, such as that described in the *Durlak and Weisburg meta-analysis*, are promising approaches to ensuring that after-school programs support a broader definition of learning and success.

Thus, in addition to pre- and in-service staff training about how to work effectively with children, youth, and families, federal programs need ongoing training and technical assistance to build strategic and management capacity and program quality. This requires sufficient set-asides in funding streams to ensure that states can develop and maintain effective systems of support for programs. Given that much of the federal investment in out-of-school supports is administered at the state and local level, the federal government can play an important role in developing the capacity of state education agencies to support local out-of-school learning efforts. Joint meetings supported by federal agencies, such as currently occur for 21st CCLC and SES administrators, should be encouraged and supported. Efforts to engage other state-level administrators of out-of-school learning supports, such as early childhood programs and public health agencies, should be sought.

- 4) *Provide incentives for after-school to partner with other providers and with schools to support learning.* The evidence base also indicates that sustained participation in a quality after-school program, which has strong connections to schools and to families, yields the best gains for program participants. After-school-school partnerships are not new, and in fact they served as the impetus for the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC, which call for schools to work in partnership with community-based and faith-based organizations. However, the past ten years have witnessed tremendous growth in expanded learning opportunity programs and initiatives aimed specifically at intentional partnerships between after-school programs and schools in order to support—but not replicate—in-school learning and development. Emerging evidence suggests that such partnerships are critical to the shared goal of supporting positive learning and development throughout the school-age years (HFRP, 2006). For example, in the *Massachusetts Afterschool Research Study*, researchers found that programs with stronger relationships with school teachers and principals were more successful at improving students' homework completion, homework effort, positive behavior, and initiative. This may be because positive relationships with schools can foster high-quality, engaging, and challenging activities, and also promote staff engagement (Intercultural Center for Research in Education et al., 2005). Similarly, an *evaluation of Supplemental Educational Services* found that program quality suffered when there were not effective partnerships between schools and SES providers. School staff were needed to help coordinate SES and identify and recruit participants; without the partnerships, SES providers were less able to align their supplementary education with in-school learning needs (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2004a). Finally, a 2008 evaluation of *Communities in Schools (CIS)*, a national dropout prevention program that connects an array of community resources to schools, reports that relative to comparison schools, CIS was found to have a positive impact on dropout, graduation, and attendance rates, as well as academic achievement (Caliber, 2008). The way in which the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grants program is currently administered, with community- and faith-based organizations able to apply for funds when they partner with schools, is a model that promotes partnerships and better organizational integration. This kind of flexibility, which allows resources to flow to entities other than

schools, expands ownership for the provision of out-of-school supports and potentially leads to a shared vision for learning.

- 5) *Consider investments in after-school as part of a whole-day/whole-year strategy for partnering with schools and summer programming to support year-long learning.* The importance of partnership leads to one last consideration: Moving forward, investments in after-school need to move beyond investments in individual programs to investments in thinking creatively about the use of time across the day and across the year. Many efforts are currently doing just that: from Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) academies nationwide to the Massachusetts Expanded Learning Time initiative, schools and districts are rethinking how to use the traditional school day to restructure core academic subjects, create meaningful enrichment opportunities for students, and help youth get ready for college (Malone, forthcoming). These new expanded learning models incorporate after-school programs within the school, expanding school days and calendars in order to balance the core curriculum with enrichment opportunities (see **text box**). Recently, the expanded learning approach has been gaining traction at the federal level, with two pieces of legislation designed to support it: The Teaching Fellows for Expanded Learning and After-School Act of 2007, designed to create school-community partnerships to assist teachers in classrooms; and Senator Edward Kennedy’s Time for Innovation Matters in Education Act (TIME) that extends the school day via competitive grants allocated through the state education agencies.

**Redefining time and learning**

As research has demonstrated the benefits of afterschool programs partnering with schools and other institutions, new approaches are emerging to blend learning across the day and year. These varied approaches include:

**Expanded learning:** School-based models that expand the school day and calendar, incorporating “afterschool” programs throughout the day in order to balance the core curriculum with enrichment opportunities.

**Community schools:** Comprehensive public schools that provide a range of services and supports for children, youth, and families across the day and year. Open all day, in the evening, and on weekends, community schools serve as one-stop learning centers for all community members, including afterschool, health and mental health, and other services.

**School-community networks:** Systems that create intentional connections between a community’s schools, afterschool programs, and other community organizations to create opportunities for seamless learning that cross traditional physical and temporal boundaries.

This last consideration amplifies a growing cry in the education sector to reconsider time use not only during the day, but during the entire year, and highlights the importance of summer learning as another essential out-of-school learning support. Thus, the review of evidence here concludes with presentation of the evidence base for summer learning programs as an extension to what we know about the impacts of after-school programs.

## 2C. Investing in Summer Learning Programs

Decades of research on summer learning loss and summer programs show that quality summer learning opportunities help to support students’ academic success in the following school year, influence students’ developmental assets, and stimulate positive social relationships (Miller,

2007). Particularly in disadvantaged neighborhoods where structured summer programs are scarce, development of summer learning opportunities helps to narrow the achievement gap, enrich students' developmental experiences, and alleviate the burden that working parents feel summer brings in regard to finding safe and engaging places for their children. Yet, despite these academic, developmental, and safety benefits—particularly for disadvantaged students—intentional, focused investments in summer learning have not occurred at the federal level and only recently has the spotlight begun shining on them in the private sector.

### **Federal Policy and Summer Learning: An Undefined Role**

Summer programs are in large part (over 80%) supported by fees parents pay to enroll their children (Larner, Zippiroli & Behrman, 1999). The remainder of the funding comes from all three levels of government and private funds. Although the federal government has not played a substantial role in summer programs, several departments (Education, Housing, Health, and Agriculture) have allowed a broader use of their existing funding streams for elements that support summer programs such as transportation funds, nutrition, professional development for staff, and fee subsidies for disadvantaged families (Fairchild, McLaughlin & Costigan, 2007). These streams have particularly benefited larger programs such as Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCA, and New York City Beacons (Larner, Zippiroli & Behrman, 1999). However, it is less clear how much federal funds have helped smaller summer programs in high-poverty neighborhoods (Miller, 2007). While the federal role for summer learning has historically been departmentalized and fragmented, the evidence is clear that investments in summer learning could substantially contribute to closing the learning and opportunity gap for disadvantaged children.

### **Summer Learning Makes a Difference: The Evidence**

Summer learning is increasingly seen as an effective strategy to complement the school year and to engage students in learning opportunities that advance students' academic performance and prepare them for postsecondary careers. Importantly, summer learning opportunities also expose students to diverse creative and outdoor activities that stimulate both mind and development. Unfortunately, while research shows that well-implemented summer learning programs can support a range of learning and developmental outcomes, research also demonstrates an opportunity gap that disadvantages low-income children and youth in accessing summer programs (Heyns, 1978). An examination of 39 summer programs notes that lack of access to structured quality programs contributes to the widening of the achievement gap along racial and socio-economic lines (Denton, 2002). Furthermore, higher-income families and those with more education are more likely to engage their children in reading or family trips and are more likely to find ways to stimulate learning even if they do not have access to quality summer programs in their community (Douglas, Henry & Martin, 2003; Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2001).

### ***Summer resource gaps contribute to long-term learning loss***

Longitudinal research of Baltimore public school students by Karl Alexander is one of the few available studies that provides long-term evidence of the importance of summer learning in providing low-income students with continuous academic success. Alexander's "faucet theory" notes that all students during the school year have access to learning resources (e.g., teachers, librarians); however, during the summer months, the resource "faucet" is turned off, leaving low-income students at risk for greater summer loss (Entwisle, Alexander & Olson, 2001). This continuous summer resource gap contributes to a cumulative learning loss that plays out in

disadvantaged students' academic performance, grade promotion, graduation rates, and higher education access (Alexander, Entwisle & Olson, 2007b). As Alexander's research notes, the summer loss during elementary school accounts for a 49-point difference on a standardized reading battery test between low- and high-income students. By age nine, the standardized test score difference grows to 73 points. By high school, the difference is 116 points (Alexander, Entwisle & Olson, 2007a). These scores reflect students' academic readiness to transition into the next school grade and indicate students' high school tracking levels and higher education attendance rates. Summer learning thus appears to be not only a matter of short-term academic gains but an important aspect of students' overall achievement and long-term scholastic success.

For over 30 years, researchers have pointed out that the key driver for summer content knowledge loss is cognitive inequality stemming from a lack of access to quality summer learning (Heyns, 1978, 1987). According to 1999 data from the National Center for Education Statistics, white students are the most likely to access summer activities (45.5% versus 24.8% for African American and 19.2% for Hispanic students) and least likely to attend summer school (7.3% versus 11% for African American and 14% for Hispanic students). Although all students experience some form of summer learning loss during the long school break, summer also exacerbates inequality in student achievement (Heyns, 1978). While research indicates that some summer loss issues could be attributed to family practices (e.g., how often families encourage student reading or support enrichment experiences), a key culprit continues to be lack of access to quality opportunities for disadvantaged students (Cooper et al., 1996). A Public Agenda poll revealed that a majority of surveyed low-income parents find access to out-of-school time opportunities challenging, yet these parents are more likely to enroll their children in academically focused programs than their higher-income counterparts (Duffett et al., 2004).

### ***Summer programs can support academic achievement***

When students actively participate in summer programs, and particularly when they are encouraged to participate by their families, they stand to improve their reading and math levels going into the next grade as well as their standardized test scores (Learning Point Associates, 2005). A *meta-analysis of 93 summer programs* (Cooper et al., 1996) indicated that summer learning has a range of effects on academic achievement for both remedial and accelerated programs. Remedial programs can have a positive effect on skills and knowledge building, particularly with smaller class sizes. Similarly, findings from the *Chicago Summer Bridge* program and *Teach Baltimore* summer program show that summer education can help to supplement students' scholastic achievement in both reading and math (Denton, 2002). In addition, academically focused summer programs help students successfully transition into the next grade level, a benefit attributable to smaller class size, individualized learning, and personal attention by teachers, all of which might not be available to students during the academic year (Cooper et al., 1996). A recent evaluation of the Kansas City Children's Defense Fund (CDF) Freedom Schools summer program finds that students who participated in the program made significant gains in reading. Students who participated in the program for three consecutive years improved their reading by 2.2 grade levels (Philliber Research Associates, 2008).

Studies have noted, though, that simply providing summer opportunities is not enough and that wider family and school environments help to explain the difference in achievement levels

between program and non-program students, as well as between students who attend summer programs regularly and those who do not (Borman & Dowling, 2006).

### ***Summer programs support other outcomes that enable learning***

Summer enrichment opportunities in settings such as camp have also been found to contribute to students' growth, in particular to youth development skills such as social skills, identity development, and positive values (Philliber et al., 2005). Summer can also provide opportunities to build family involvement. The largest existing survey of camp experiences (5,000 participants), the *Sharing Youth Development and Research Enriching the Lives of Children study*, concludes that students who participate in summer camps experience statistically significant changes in several dimensions: social skills, physical skills; positive identity, values, and individual growth. Even six months after their camp experiences, students and their families reported continuous positive effects from the camp (Philliber et al., 2005).

### ***Summer programming can support family involvement***

Significant impacts were found for parents encouraging their children to read and actually reading to their children when they participated in the *BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life) Accelerated Learning Summer Program* (Chaplin & Capizzano, 2006) (see **text box**). Additionally, the *Cooper meta-analysis* of summer programs mentioned above concluded that summer programs that included parental involvement produced larger effects than programs without this component.

#### **Family Involvement in Summer Programs**

Family involvement can increase the effectiveness of summer learning—and high quality summer experiences can also increase family involvement. For example, a random assignment evaluation of *BELL's* 1,000 elementary school students who attended the program in Boston and New York in 2005 found that the intervention helped students gain a month's worth of reading skills compared to the control group. The study employed *BELL* program artifacts, parent and student surveys, and student tests as data sources. The findings showed parents of *BELL* Summer participants were more likely to read to their children and to encourage their children to read.

### **Summer Learning Policy Moving Forward: What Needs to Happen Next**

As in the case of after-school, support for summer learning programs spans several departments in addition to the Department of Education, including the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Health and Human Services (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, National School Lunch Program and the Summer Food Service Program). The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is also available to parents, funding childcare options like YM/WCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, and smaller local summer programs (Food Research and Action Center, 2006). Finally, Department of Agriculture Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) offers funding for youth education and the 4-H national program. Although provisions focus on after-school, funding can also be extended to summer learning (Sandel & Bhat, 2008).

The U.S. Department of Education has been a fairly recent supporter of summer learning. Both the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC and SES under NCLB can be applied to support struggling students through summer school, tutoring, and structured summer programs (Public/Private Ventures, 2002). The Library Services and Technology Act and the Summer Library Reading Program help local libraries run reading and literacy programs during summer hours. In 2004, the Department of Education initiated a Summer Reading Achievers pilot program in 11 cities to support student

leisure reading; however, its experimental design evaluation did not find significant differences in summer reading between the treatment and control groups, and concluded that districts are already doing enough to support summer learning through whole-school reform. The program was not funded beyond its pilot stage (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2004b, 2005). Today, there are two pending pieces of legislation that directly support summer learning, then-Senator (now president) Obama’s Summer Term Education Programs and Upward Performance (STEP UP) Act, designed to support grades K-3 reading and math programs; and Congressmen Dodd and Cochran’s Summer Service Learning Act that would provide \$900 million for youth programs. Advocates like the Center for Summer Learning hope that summer learning will be more explicitly funded in the future to support adolescent literacy, academic achievement, and students’ physical and emotional development (Fairchild, McLaughlin & Costigan, 2007). Moving forward, the current federal role, combined with the evidence on effective summer learning programs, leads to two recommendations for strengthening summer learning policies at the federal level.

- 1) *Intentionally target resources for summer learning within existing funding streams.* While federal funding does exist across several departments, there are currently no substantial streams in each of these departments that specifically target summer learning. Although pending legislative acts have risen in support of summer programs, they have yet to be realized. The current state of summer funding continues to be departmentalized and fragmented. To support their efforts, summer programs continue to face a daunting task of gathering piecemeal funds to assist with elements of their work. Thus, sustaining smaller programs is difficult.
  
- 2) *Commit to a comprehensive and integrated professional development system for out-of-school learning, particularly forging connections among summer learning and after-school providers.* Staffing (and program) quality varies depending on the program context and content, ranging through teachers, paraprofessionals, youth volunteers, and community members. While some higher education institutions (e.g., Arizona State University, University of Wisconsin, River Falls, and University of California Berkeley) offer out-of-school time certification, some summer programs continue to have untrained staff. As with after-school, research points to the critical role that well-prepared staff play in attaining positive outcomes. The work of learning ultimately happens in the day-to-day interactions between youth and the adults in their lives. To realize a broader vision of learning, all adults who work with children—including teachers, school administrators, after-school and summer staff, and family liaisons—must have adequate pre- and in-service training that fosters understanding of the varied types of learning and provides strategies for how to achieve them. To ensure a seamless education for all, professional development efforts should be aligned and coordinated. For example, federal legislation can take its cue from local district- and school-level efforts that provide joint professional development to teachers and after-school staff. The new Teaching Fellows for Expanded Learning and After-School Act of 2007 is

**Future Directions for Summer Learning Policy**

Intentionally target resources for summer learning within existing funding streams.

Commit to comprehensive and integrated professional development systems for out-of-school learning, particularly forging connections among summer learning and after-school providers.

an example of one such effort. The proposed legislation calls for partnerships with community-based organizations and schools to recruit and retain new teachers and cultivate leadership to support expanded learning models.

### **3. Moving Toward a Complementary Learning System: Continuity and Comprehensiveness**

The previous section of the paper shows evidence that investments in specific out-of-school learning supports are warranted, and that they are at least on the radar of federal policy. However, emerging from the evidence base for each of the three out-of-school learning supports is a set of shared implementation lessons that show the need for more intentional connections among the individual supports, thereby moving toward a more systemic and comprehensive approach to supporting learning in and out of school. Complementary learning in turn necessitates a reconfigured role for the federal government in out-of-school learning. The cross-cutting lessons are as follows:

- (1) Families are critical partners in learning across all out-of-school supports.
- (2) Time is an important component of learning.
- (3) Intensity and engagement within and across multiple out-of-school learning supports are necessary to achieve good outcomes.
- (4) A sustained commitment to quality is vital to good outcomes.
- (5) Partnerships strengthen and support the outcomes of individual out-of-school learning supports.

#### **(1) Families are critical partners in learning.**

First, and to reiterate a basic premise of this paper, family involvement matters for children and youth of all ages, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and socioeconomic strata, although the mechanisms of effect may vary (Desimone, 1999; Hill, 2001; Hill & Craft, 2003; Jeynes, 2003, 2005, 2007). In fact, both developmental and intervention studies have found that the most at-risk children and families benefit most from family involvement (Layzer et al., 2001; Fuligni, Brooks-Gunn, & Berlin, 2003; Schulting, Malone, & Dodge, 2005; Dearing et al., 2004). *The School Transition Study*, for example, found that children from lower socioeconomic status had approximately 10% fewer correct answers on literacy scales, but this gap disappeared entirely when their mothers were highly involved in their learning (Dearing et al., 2004). Some research has looked beyond the contribution of families to in-school learning to examine how families can support and complement after-school and summer learning. Evidence presented above suggests that family involvement in complementary learning supports can both strengthen the capacity of the support to deliver services and promote stronger family engagement in their children's schooling. Thus, families can—and, we argue, should—be important agents in getting access to and sustaining participation in other complementary learning supports for their children. There is a need to cultivate a more systemic approach to family involvement at the federal, state, and local levels.

#### **(2) Time is an important component of learning.**

Learning does not stop with the last school bell; therefore, time for learning should not be confined to school day alone (Aronson, Zimmerman, & Carlos, 1999). Time for learning instead includes before-, during, and after-school hours, weekends, and the summer months. Connecting the time to learn across the day and across the year helps students build new skills, tools, and competencies; promotes strong relationships across stakeholders; and garners resources that more effectively serve the whole child. Since *A Nation at Risk* (1983), there have been growing conversations across public, business, and philanthropic sectors on the need to rethink standards, school calendars, and the learning acquisition that students require to succeed in the new millennium (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Yet the current No Child Left Behind legislation has in large part limited the broader goals of schooling, focusing primarily on standardized tests and on the adequate yearly progress (AYP) measure (Commission on No Child Left Behind, 2006; von Zastrow & Janc, 2004). The unintended consequences of this mandate have been the narrowing of the liberal arts and an increase in instructional time via longer class periods, mandatory remediation classes, and shorter summer breaks. A survey by the Center on Education Policy notes that 71% of districts have since 2002 reduced instruction time in non-core subjects and increased instructional hours in math to 141 minutes and in English to 520 minutes a week, an increase of 47% since NCLB (Rentner et al., 2006).

While focus on core subjects is essential in helping children reach proficiency levels on standardized tests, schools have never been the only vehicle carrying the cargo of children’s learning. The evidence base on the three complementary learning supports reviewed in this paper is unambiguous: Family involvement, after-school, and summer learning all carry heavy freight in the educational train as important contexts, outside of school, where learning takes place (Brown, Rocha, & Sharkey, 2005). Rethinking learning time calls for educators and after-school and summer learning practitioners to reconfigure academic and enrichment programs in order to provide seamless learning across the day for all students (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2006). It means redefining when and where learning takes place and recognizing that the school day should operate in concert with complementary learning supports to help alleviate barriers to learning, graduation, and job readiness (Fortune, 2008). The no-final-bell approach to learning helps to promote continuous investment in student learning (Gewertz, 2008), which is particularly salient to disadvantaged children and youth who have for decades been shortchanged in gaining an equal start and access to quality programs that help prepare them for adulthood.

### **(3) Intensity and engagement within and across multiple supports is necessary to achieve good outcomes.**

Evidence suggests that greater participation yields greater gains across all of the out-of-school learning supports reviewed here, yet too often the students and families who could reap maximum benefits from participation do so the least. When parents participate with higher “dosage” and intensity—that is, more frequently or for longer periods of time—and are more actively engaged, children and families appear to benefit more (Erion, 2006; Liaw, Miesels, & Brooks-Gunn, 1995; Raikes et al., 2006; St. Pierre et al., 1995). Parents receiving home visits through the *Early Head Start* program were more likely to be involved when they received more visits with greater frequency and for longer periods of time, and when they were more engaged (Raikes et al., 2006).

The same principles hold for summer learning and after-school programs. For example, following up on students with long-term involvement (at least four years) in the *LA's BEST* program revealed that greater participation was significantly related to positive achievement on standardized tests of mathematics, reading, and language arts when the influence of gender, ethnicity, income, and language status was controlled for (Huang et al., 2000). While expectations for attendance change over time, with younger students participating more frequently than older ones, students still need to attend for a sufficient amount of time to achieve age-appropriate learning and development goals set by programs.

In addition to within-program intensity and duration, emerging evidence on after-school programs suggests that as children enter middle school, it is important for them to experience a variety of developmental and learning opportunities across the week and across the year. A developmental approach to middle and high school after-school programming, then, necessitates better connections and alignment among community service providers to ensure that, across the various places where children spend their time, they are getting exposure to and experience with the skills necessary for success.

#### **(4) A sustained commitment to quality is vital to good outcomes.**

A consistent conclusion from the evidence across the three complementary learning supports reviewed here is that the quality of the learning environment greatly affects a program's capacity to get results. Recent studies on after-school and summer learning indicate that program quality is inextricably tied to student outcomes, with low-quality programming actually doing harm in terms of supporting students' development. *The Study of Promising After-School Programs*, as well as the developmental research described earlier in this section, underscore the need to make intentional investments in program quality in order to maximize the likelihood of achieving positive developmental gains.

The same holds true for family involvement interventions. For example, a study of the *Kentucky Family Resource Centers* found that centers with higher implementation fidelity had higher success rates in a number of areas, including students' academic proficiency scores and dropout risk (Kalafat, Illback, & Sanders, 2007). In fact, variation in quality across sites may help to explain the mixed results of *Even Start* and other national evaluations (St. Pierre et al., 2003). Unlike after-school and summer learning, where the field is reaching consensus on a set of quality features (Yohalem & Wilson-Alhstrom, 2007), the varied nature of family interventions renders the field unable to have a single prescription for quality. However, themes are emerging across interventions—for example, strong connections to school personnel, strong leadership, staff training, and a focus on recruitment and retention.

We know that changing parenting and family involvement are complex processes, which may take multiple generations (Phillips et al., 1998) and which require consistent and systemic efforts that go beyond one-time workshops or isolated programs. To be effective, interventions therefore require ongoing investments in quality and sustainability (Caspé & Lopez, 2006; Brooks-Gunn, Berlin & Fuligni, 2000). Such investments for family involvement have been rare to date. While investments in program quality are getting stronger for after-school and summer learning, many programs open their doors with less-than-ideal learning environments. In fact, the latest *21st CCLC PPICS* data from Learning Points Associates indicates that more mature programs are

more likely to be able to deliver on quality—therefore, students participate more frequently, with higher levels of engagement, and thus reap maximum benefit from participation (Stonehill & Little, 2008). This suggests the need for multi-year investments in out-of-school learning supports to ensure that they can get to and sustain the levels of quality sufficient to improve outcomes.

**(5) Partnerships strengthen and support the outcomes of individual complementary learning supports: better connections are needed among them and with schools.**

Supporting learning throughout the day, throughout the year, and throughout a child’s life requires partnerships. After-school research indicates that after-school programs are more likely to exhibit high quality when they effectively develop, utilize, and leverage partnerships with a variety of stakeholders such as families, schools, and communities (Arbreton, Sheldon, & Herrera, 2005). Further, participation in after-school programs can leverage family involvement in children’s schooling (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2003).

Providing resources and tools for program staff to engage families and community members (including community and faith-based organizations) as strategic partners could help support student summer learning, enable co-constructed programs that align with students’ learning needs, and establish collaboration between school and nonschool supports (Bell & Carrillo, 2007). Partnerships across community stakeholders set shared priorities, combine existing resources, and build public will that supports summer learning programs (Byrne & Hansberry, 2007). While the ultimate focus must always be on children’s learning, the most effective interventions are those that are co-constructed and meet all parties’ needs so that they may in turn support children’s learning (Lopez, Kreider, & Caspe, 2004/05). Large-scale interventions have demonstrated this lesson. For example, evaluators of the *Comprehensive Child Development Program* found that parents’ unmet basic social needs limited parents’ ability to be involved in their children’s learning and overwhelmed the original goals of the intervention (St. Pierre & Layzer, 1999). Similarly, a national evaluation of Head Start found high rates of depression among parents, which may have impacted the mixed success of the program (Administration for Children and Families, 2003).

Currently, most of the partnership efforts between out-of-school supports are bi-directional: schools partner with families, after-school programs partner with schools, etc. This is a promising first step toward complementary learning, but efforts to deepen existing partnerships need to be coupled with efforts to expand them to ensure a network of learning supports. Other child-serving systems, such as health, are moving in this same direction of recognizing a broad set of needs, engaging multiple agencies to partner in addressing them, and making a commitment to supporting health beyond the early childhood years. There is national momentum towards adopting a comprehensive, coordinated approach that addresses the health and well-being of the whole child, including the child’s physical environment and social service needs. Further, proponents of this approach call for consideration of these needs over the long term, not just in early childhood (Nemours Health and Prevention Services et al., 2008).

For the most part we see these implementation lessons at the local level. Family involvement and partnerships are essential for support of a local community’s children and youth, and intensity, engagement, and quality are features that matter most in local programs and initiatives. But the

federal government has an essential role to play to support these implementation lessons and foster more and better continuous, comprehensive, and complementary learning systems. We turn next to the federal-level roles, policy tools, and resources that can support state and local efforts to create these systems for children and youth.

#### **4. Recommendations for the Federal Role in Out-of-School Learning**

With the passage of the historic Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, the President and Congress declared that it was in the national interest for the federal government to take on national educational leadership and funding roles to insure equal educational opportunity for disadvantaged children (Jennings, 2001). As the name of the act indicates, the assumption was that elementary and secondary schools unassisted would manage to level the playing field for disadvantaged children. But more than 40 years of research since ESEA confirm that America will not achieve its national goals of equal educational opportunity, leaving no child behind, or of preparing its workforce and citizenry for 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges, without addressing the inequities in out-of-school learning opportunities as a major component of education reform.

As in 1965, national leaders should use the bully pulpit, as well as federal leverage and funding, to enable states, counties, and communities to make the shift toward more complementary learning. This leadership can capitalize on growing national, state, and local momentum and readiness to shift to a broader education reform strategy that redefines what learning is, who enables it, and when and where it takes place. Whether they describe it as a “broader, bolder approach,” “a new day for learning,” or comprehensive, extended, or complementary learning, numerous educational organizations, nonprofit and professional groups, elected officials, and business and citizen groups are calling for inclusion of these broader educational opportunities and supports.

The recommendations that follow are intended to move the current federal role in out-of-school learning from investments in individual out-of-school supports, to investments in supports that are networked and aligned with schools, to a full vision of complementary learning, which calls for seamless delivery of comprehensive learning and developmental supports across the day, across the year, and across a child’s development from birth through adolescence. Following, in brief, are our recommendations:

- (1) Use federal leadership, the bully pulpit, funding, and leverage to promote equitable out-of-school learning opportunities and integrate them into the center of the education reform discussion; enact and fully fund legislation that will enable states and communities to implement more continuous, aligned, and systemic efforts to educate all children.
- (2) Promote innovation to implement continuous, comprehensive, complementary learning systems at the local level.
- (3) Support accountability across all components of a complementary learning system, including schools and out-of-school learning supports.

- (4) Use legislative and policy tools to enable complementary learning.
- (5) Explore and build public-private non-profit partnerships to scale and assure the quality of non-school supports.

Collectively, these five recommendations comprise the federal role in developing, implementing, and testing a national strategy for complementary learning. They lead to a final recommendation: drafting and passage of the Pathways to Educational Success Act of 2009, confirming federal leadership and support for a new era of educational innovation and reform.

## **Investing in a Systemic and Aligned Approach to Learning**

- (1) Use federal leadership, the bully pulpit, funding, and leverage to promote equitable out-of-school learning opportunities and integrate them into the center of the education reform discussion; enact and fully fund legislation that will enable states and communities to implement more continuous, aligned, and systemic efforts to educate all children.**

Using its leadership role, the federal government can shift the national mindset about where and how children learn to understanding that schools are a core, but not sole, contributor to educational success. Federal leadership that puts the national spotlight on the importance of out-of-school learning and its alignment with schools, that supports innovation with learning and accountability, and that builds a long-term strategy to achieve complementary learning will, in turn, leverage sustainable state and local change. Immediate action such as the creation of a high-level position in the U.S. Department of Education with responsibility for all out-of-school learning and its alignment with schools would signal the importance of this change. New legislation and modifications of NCLB allowing flexibility in the use of Title I, SES, and other funding streams for complementary learning services and linkages, is also necessary. In addition, new and existing higher education legislation should take into account both immediate and longer-term needs for professional development for all those involved in complementary learning, including teachers, administrators, and after-school and summer learning providers.

- (2) Promote innovation to implement continuous, comprehensive, complementary learning systems at the local level.**

The types of changes envisioned here will require the federal government not just to serve as regulator and agent of accountability, but also to stimulate and fund innovation. Marginal change is insufficient to enable states and communities to make the necessary fundamental transformations in how we define and organize learning. Arguing that the research and development infrastructure for school improvement is currently weak and that this constitutes a case of “market failure for educational innovation” (p.182), Bryk and Gomez (2008) recommend that innovations be co-developed by interdisciplinary researchers, practitioners, and social entrepreneurs with a commitment to continuous improvement. They suggest that innovations must be co-developed by researchers and practitioners within a continuous improvement approach. Researchers as well as policymakers applaud the emphasis on research-based educational policy and programs. However, they are increasingly recognizing the limits of existing research alone to solve our most pressing educational problems and are calling on the government to fund innovative new approaches to insuring that many more children reach

proficiency (Joftus, 2008). In order to promote innovation to implement continuous, comprehensive, complementary learning systems at the local level, we recommend that the federal government:

- Develop a strategic national research, development, and innovation agenda and leverage private and philanthropic dollars as well as public funding to support it.
- Use federal leadership and leadership dollars to encourage and support state and local innovation to test new complementary learning approaches and evaluate existing ones within framework of learning, continuous improvement, and accountability.
- Use research actively to support more effective policy and practice. Share lessons from ongoing innovations to support learning and continuous improvement across states and communities; continue to disseminate information about effective initiatives and programs through mechanisms such as the What Works Clearinghouse ([www.whatworks.ed.gov](http://www.whatworks.ed.gov)) as part of the national commitment to learning, continuous improvement, and accountability.

### **(3) Support accountability across all components of a complementary learning system, including schools and out-of-school learning supports.**

Accountability is now part of American education. The passage of NCLB in 2001 brought a clear emphasis on outcomes, explicit requirements for standards and assessment systems, and more transparent accountability. In doing so, it significantly raised expectations for states, local education agencies, and schools such that all schools are now expected to meet or exceed state standards in reading and math by 2014. While there has been much debate about the merits of NCLB as an education reform strategy, there is some consensus that its emphasis on accountability—which in the end revealed that many schools were failing to meet AYP standards—has been instrumental in shaping the realization that “schools can’t do it alone.” In that sense, NCLB has contributed to current thinking about the importance of out-of-school learning as complementary to school improvement strategies. Thus, any new efforts to reform education must be coupled with efforts to reform and strengthen—not shy away from—an accountability system that can target improvement strategies to specific schools and districts, as well as identify the localized network of out-of-school supports that can best complement those schools and districts. In order reform our current accountability system, we recommend that the federal government take leadership to:

- Broaden the frame of accountability to include 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Unlike the current accountability system, with its narrow focus on math and reading, an accountability system for complementary learning needs to take into account the attainment of proficiency in a broader set of skills, beyond the “3 Rs,” to include assessments of critical thinking, civic engagement, and teamwork. This is largely uncharted territory for the federal government and will require different, and broader, thinking about desired outcomes for children.
- Expand methods of assessment. Expanding the frame of accountability requires changing the ways in which progress toward outcomes is assessed. Alternative assessments, such as portfolios and measures of school climate, can augment more traditional approaches to

assessment to provide a more complete picture of what is possible in a complementary learning environment.

- Integrate data systems across learning supports to ensure progress on a shared vision for learning. A core premise of this paper is that disadvantaged children and youth have inequitable access to out-of-school supports and that part of the federal role is to ensure greater access to them. If the federal government is to know if its investments in out-of-school supports are reaching the children who need them, local out-of-school learning supports that receive federal resources must have systems for tracking participation across the full array of available supports in the community. Only in this way can progress toward equity be monitored and assessed. In addition to monitoring for equity and access, data systems should be linked to better understand the whole range of services a child receives and how this affects this child in the long term.

Though the federal role in integrated local data systems is extremely limited, the federal government could show leadership in this area by supporting the development of integrated data systems as part of its investments in research, demonstration, and innovation sites. Mechanisms that bring multiple community stakeholders together for regular progress updates and action planning already exist (see, for example, McLaughlin & O'Brien-Strain, 2008). These should be examined and scaled to support better integration of data in places attempting to implement complementary learning.

#### **(4) Use legislative and policy tools to enable complementary learning.**

Sustaining investment in after-school, summer learning, and family involvement is vital to the success of the federal role in supporting complementary learning. But there are several other ways to be more intentional about support: the federal government could make it easier to create linkages, and leverage its investments to partner with others to support programs and innovation, thus facilitating the creation of complementary learning systems. We recommend a combination of some realignment of existing funding and the creation of new sources of funding, both of which would have an impact at the federal, state, and local levels. Specifically, we recommend that the federal role include:

- Provide incentives for communities to create linkage with existing resources. Because complementary learning work is fundamentally local, communities themselves need access and encouragement to use funds to link and align supports. The federal government can provide financial incentives for communities to create linkages at the district or city level and waivers that will enable communities to use existing funding streams for them.
- Allocate new resources to support connections among out-of-school supports and schools. Communities also need new funding and incentives to support connections among out-of-school supports and schools. Thus, it is critical to have not only seed money or innovation grants to get these initiatives off the ground but also “glue money” to foster and maintain partnerships. Because program funding usually does not come with support for partnership work, the federal government could play a larger role in providing the financing and flexibility that will make these connections happen. Additionally, federal funding could also build in requirements for linkages at the local level, particularly for connections with families.

- Enable communities and districts to pool big funding streams such as 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC, SES/Title I, and Child Care Development Funds, to provide a percentage of funds for stable local after-school and summer learning programs, as well as early childhood supports. Use these pooled resources to develop individual 365/24/7 learning plans that consider participation in a range of out-of-school learning opportunities from birth through high school graduation.
- Encourage transparent state budgets and provide incentives. The federal government could also encourage greater transparency in budgeting for children and youth by offering incentives to states to create children’s budgets. These budgets would indicate to the public how money is being spent on education across agencies and what efforts are being made to advance complementary learning. There has been a recent proposal to do this in the federal budget (Senator Robert Menendez, [www.menendez.senate.gov](http://www.menendez.senate.gov)), but situating this practice at the state level would bring it closer to the point of service delivery and might also highlight differences in spending across states.
- Use federal infrastructure to create leadership for out-of-school supports at the national level. Infrastructure is another powerful way for the federal government to communicate the importance of reframing learning. For example, an Assistant Secretary for Out-of-School Learning at the Department of Education would serve to coordinate efforts across agencies and leverage the work happening in different departments to create a more integrated approach to education. In addition, there has been renewed interest in funding the federal Youth Coordination Act (FYCA), which was signed into law in 2006 but has yet to receive funding. In the summer of 2008, the inclusion of \$1 million for the FYCA in a House appropriations bill showed renewed momentum for FYCA.

**(5) Explore and build public-private-nonprofit partnerships to scale and assure the quality of out-of-school supports.**

Over the past 50 years of federal investment in out-of-school learning supports, public-private partnerships have played a small but important role in augmenting and leveraging federal investments to support quality. For example, when the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC grants program was established, the C. S. Mott Foundation seized the opportunity to partner with the U.S. Department of Education. The partnership ensured that elements that the government could not support at the time—technical assistance, public will, seeding evaluation, promising practices, policy development, and communication—were supported as needed to ensure the sustainability and expansion of the grants program. While Mott’s partnership efforts may be exceptional, this kind of private support of public investments will be needed to ensure equitable access to quality complementary learning opportunities. To develop such partnerships, we recommend that the federal government:

- Reach out to foundations to partner with them to support out-of-school learning. Given the large philanthropic interest in and support of the better integration of school and out-of-school supports for learning, the time is ripe for the federal government to partner with foundations to build, test the value of, and if appropriate, expand integrated reform efforts and ensure that they are of sufficient quality to achieve positive outcomes at scale.

- Provide incentives and requirements for state and local grant recipients to match federal dollars. Many funding streams currently have a local-match requirement. This approach to federal grant-making stimulates public–private partnerships by requiring that out-of-school learning supports connect with other funders. Such an approach also contributes to sustainability by broadening the funding base.

## **Leading a New Era of Innovation and Education Reform: Proposing the Pathways to Educational Success Act**

Research shows the out-of-school learning contributes to, and in fact is necessary for, positive learning and developmental outcomes. It is time, therefore, for the federal government to innovate and experiment with extended learning opportunities, and time to insure all children are on a pathway to success defined as high school completion and post-secondary training so that they have the skills necessary to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We acknowledge that some federal efforts to do so are already underway, such as the new Full Service Community Schools Act and the Time for Innovation Matters in Education (TIME) Act. But we conclude that these are not sufficient to push complementary learning from the shallows into the mainstream of education reform.

Thus, our final recommendation is to establish a new federal education policy—the *Pathways to Educational Success Act of 2009*—which would enable districts and schools to work with communities to develop and test new, local, complementary learning systems that offer the elements that research indicates are necessary for children to succeed, within a framework of shared accountability for better outcomes.

The new legislation should require an early, continuous, comprehensive, and complementary learning approach implemented by local districts in partnership with community-based and faith-based organizations and should include the following provisions:

- The creation of a place-based implementation plan for a comprehensive learning system which includes pre-k, schools, out-of-school learning supports, health, mental health, and economic supports, and which articulates how these supports will work with each other and with families to support learning.
- Flexibility in the specifics of the approach to enable communities to target areas of need and build on existing resources and strengths.
- Community-level governance and accountability with shared integrated data systems.
- Demonstration of public-private partnerships to support the complementary learning system.

This national strategy for complementary learning will require support from multiple stakeholders at the federal, state, and local levels, including educators, teachers, early care providers, after-school and summer learning providers, and families. We offer our framework and recommendations to inform these stakeholders’ efforts to redesign our current education

system to include not only excellent schools but also the provision of high-quality complementary learning supports, particularly for disadvantaged children and youth. Four decades of consistent research evidence make clear that failure to redefine learning and where and when it takes place, and to follow up with innovations that enable communities to move to a complementary learning approach, will prevent the country from reaching its national goal of educating all children.

### **About Harvard Family Research Project**

Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP) researches, develops, and evaluates strategies to promote the well-being of children, youth, families, and their communities. We work primarily within three areas that support children's learning and development: early childhood education, out-of-school time programming, and family and community support in education. Underpinning all of our work is a commitment to evaluation for strategic decision making, learning, and accountability. Building on our knowledge that schools cannot do it alone, we also focus national attention on complementary learning. Complementary learning is the idea that a systemic approach, which integrates school and nonschool supports, can better ensure that all children have the skills they need to succeed. To learn more about how HFRP can support your work with children and families, visit our website at [www.hfrp.org](http://www.hfrp.org).

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