



Strengthen What Happens Outside School to Improve What Happens Inside

The federal government can ensure that all children, especially economically and otherwise disadvantaged ones, have opportunities for after-school learning, summer learning, and family support that improve their chances for school success.

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Federal education legislation has long assumed that K-12 schools could operate alone to level the learning field for poor children. But 40 years of steadily accumulating research has shown that this assumption is incorrect.

We now know that opportunities for after-school learning, summer learning, and support for families are major predictors of children's development, educational achievement, and school success. Research also suggests 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 development and chances for school success.

This research confirms that America will not achieve its national goals of equal educational opportunity, leaving no child behind, or preparing its workforce and citizenry for 21st-century challenges without addressing the importance of and inequities in out-of-school learning opportu-

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nities as a major component of education reform. The recent federal commitment to more research-informed policy and to accountability has helped pave the way for the growing understanding that schools alone aren't enough, thus posing a critical policy question: What, in conjunction with high-quality early childhood programs and good schools, is necessary to increase the chances that all children, especially economically and otherwise disadvantaged ones, will enter and leave school with the skills for 21st-century success?

There is now a strong research-based case for continuing and expanding current federal investments in family involvement, after-school, and summer learning programs and for new efforts to ensure that these out-of-school supports work with each other and with schools to promote shared learning and development

organizations, nonprofit and philanthropic groups, elected officials, and business and civic leaders are calling for federal support to continue or to plan, implement, and test different complementary learning approaches within a framework of learning, continuous improvement, and accountability (Harvard Family Research Project 2005; Gordon 2005; Stonehill et al. 2009; Dryfoos, Quinn, and Barkin 2005).

The six recommendations here 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.

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goals. However, past federal efforts arguably have marginalized and siloed out-of-school learning opportunities and created barriers to federal, state, and local efforts to intentionally align them to complement and reinforce each other. As a result, federal resources aren't being used as strategically, effectively, or efficiently as they could be to create strong pathways to success across a child's development and school career.

This is the year when national leaders can signal the start of a new era in federal support for equal educational opportunity by using the bully pulpit, as well as federal leverage and funding, to enable states, counties, and communities to innovate and move toward more complementary learning. This leadership can capitalize on the growing momentum and readiness to shift to a broader education strategy that redefines what 21st-century learning is, who enables it, and when and where such learning occurs. Whether described as complementary, comprehensive, supplementary, or expanded learning; community or full service schools; a "broader, bolder approach"; "children's zones"; "promise neighborhoods"; or "a new day for learning," numerous education leaders and or-

Collectively, they specify the federal role in developing, implementing, and testing a national strategy for complementary learning. The final recommendation — drafting and passage of the Pathways to Educational Success Act of 2009 — would signal federal leadership for a new era of educational innovation, effectiveness, and accountability.

RECOMMENDATION #1

Enact and fully fund legislation that will enable states and communities to implement more continuous, aligned, and systemic efforts to educate all children.

Federal leadership can leverage sustainable state and local change and shift the national mindset about where and how children learn by shining the national spotlight on the importance of out-of-school learning, supporting innovation with learning and accountability, and building a long-term strategy to achieve complementary learning. Immediate action could encompass 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

Harvard Family Research Project

For almost 25 years, the Harvard Family Research Project's mission has been to research, develop, and evaluate strategies to promote the well-being of children, youth, families, and their communities, working primarily within three areas that support children's learning and development — early childhood education, out-of-school programming, and family and community support in education.

Underpinning all of HFRP's work is a commitment to evaluation for strategic decision making, learning, and accountability. Building on the knowledge that schools cannot do it alone, it focuses national attention on complementary learning.

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with schools. Also necessary are new legislation and modifications to No Child Left Behind to allow flexibility in using Title I, Supplemental Education Services (SES) dollars and other funding streams for complementary learning services; to create a systemic and sustained commitment to family involvement that cuts across all complementary learning legislation and initiatives; and to meet immediate and longer-term professional development needs for all those involved in complementary learning, including teachers, administrators, and after-school and summer learning providers.

RECOMMENDATION #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 to serve not just as regulator and agent of accountability, but also as a stimulator and funder of 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,” Bryk and Gomez (2008, p. 182) recommend that interdisciplinary researchers, practitioners, and social entrepreneurs co-develop innovations with a commitment

to continuous improvement. While applauding the emphasis on research-based educational policy and programs, researchers and policy makers increasingly recognize the limits of existing research to solve our most pressing educational problems and are calling on the government to fund innovative new approaches to ensuring that many more children reach proficiency (Joftus 2008).

The federal role is to set a strategic national research, development, and innovation agenda for complementary learning and to couple it with the dollars necessary to encourage and support state and local innovation. Lessons from such investments must be shared to support learning and continuous improvement across states and communities, and federally supported dissemination mechanisms, such as the What Works Clearinghouse, should be continued as part of the national commitment to learning, continuous improvement, and accountability.

RECOMMENDATION #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. While there has been much debate about the merits of NCLB as an education reform strategy, there is broad 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.

Reforming our current accountability frame requires the federal government to take leadership on:

- Assessing proficiency in a broader set of skills, beyond the “3 R's,” to include assessments of critical thinking, civic engagement, and teamwork;

- Expanding methods of assessment to augment more traditional approaches to provide a more complete picture of what is possible in a complementary learning environment; and
- Integrating data systems across in- and out-of-school learning supports to ensure progress on a shared vision for learning.

RECOMMENDATION #4

Use legislative and policy tools to enable complementary learning.

Sustaining investment in after-school programs, 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 could 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:

- Providing incentives for communities to create linkages with existing resources, allocating new resources to support connections between out-of-school supports and schools;
- Enabling communities and districts to pool big funding streams, such as Title I/SES and Child Care Funds;
- Developing 365/24/7 learning plans that consider participation in a range of out-of-school learning opportunities from birth through high school graduation; and
- Encouraging transparent state and local budgets that indicate how money is being spent on education across agencies and in support of complementary learning.

RECOMMENDATION #5

Explore and build public-private-nonprofit partnerships to scale and ensure the quality of out-of-school supports.

When Congress established the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants, 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 available to ensure the sustainability and expansion of the grants program. While Mott’s partnership efforts may

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be exceptional, such private support of public investments will be needed to ensure the necessary cycle of innovation, evaluation, learning, and accountability, as well as equitable access to quality complementary learning opportunities.

To develop public-private partnerships to scale, the federal role should include seeking foundation part-

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 activities (including sports, arts, mentoring programs, etc.),
- Cultural and community institutions,
- Colleges and universities, and
- Health, social services, and other safety net services.

Complementary learning approaches ensure 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.

ners and providing incentives and requirements for state and local grant recipients to match federal dollars.

RECOMMENDATION #6

Develop the Pathways to Educational Success Act.

Given that out-of-school learning contributes to, and in fact is necessary for, positive learning and developmental outcomes, the federal government should innovate and experiment with extended learning opportunities and time to ensure that all children are headed toward high school completion and post-secondary training. Some federal efforts are already under way, such as the new Full Service Community Schools Act and the Time for Innovation Matters in Education (TIME) Act. But these aren't sufficient to push complementary learning from the shallows into the mainstream of education reform.

Thus, our final recommendation is 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 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:

- Creation of a place-based implementation plan for a comprehensive learning system that includes preK, schools, out-of-school learning supports, health, mental health, and economic supports and that articulates how these supports will work with each other and with families to support learning;
- Flexibility 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; and
- 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 failure 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. ■

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