Out-of-School Time Programs: We’re Here to Support Your Students

Local out-of-school time programs are an essential part of your school’s response to the coronavirus pandemic and will continue to play a critical role through recovery. As we look ahead to the next school year, out-of-school time leaders and educators stand ready to help children catch up and keep up, which includes ensuring all kids have access to learning opportunities and the supports they need to emerge from this crisis strong, resilient, and hopeful.

No matter what your school’s reopening strategy is, out-of-school time programs are eager to serve and innovatively adapt their programming to keep students safe and ensure their needs are met. Here are four ways out-of-school time programs can support student success:

- **More time for engaged learning.** Out-of-school time programs can engage students with additional learning time to make up for learning loss and support learning at a distance.

- **Help students feel and heal.** At out-of-school time programs, youth have the opportunities to develop positive relationships with caring adults and mentors and receive social-emotional learning supports that allow students to be ready to learn. Out-of-school time is also a safe space for kids to be exposed to new experiences and spark new interests in fun and engaging ways.

- **Sustain connections to families.** Not only do out-of-school time programs allow families to return to work, but they can also support schools’ efforts to engage families by connecting families to food, health, economic, and other types of resources.

- **Address inequities that are likely worsening.** Out-of-school time programs reach and serve a significant number of young people from families who have low income and diverse backgrounds. Programs also can serve the students who might not have the same level of family support at home to help them with learning at a distance.

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**Did you know?**

In Michigan, more than 200,000 school-age (K-12) youth across the entire state rely on out-of-school time programs. These expanded learning programs include: 4-H clubs; Boys & Girls Clubs; YMCAs; teen leadership and service programs; summer camps; and robotics, college readiness, science and technology, sports, arts and music, drama, and academic enrichment programs. Kids attend these programs before school, after school, and during the summer.

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## What Out-of-School Time Can Offer for Various Reopening Strategies

No matter which strategy your school uses to reopen, out-of-school time can help! By inviting your out-of-school time partners to your planning discussions and collaborating to align resources and facilities, out-of-school time providers can help be creative in collectively meeting the needs of your school.

### Staggered Times

Some districts may have A and B groups that attend on alternating days or in AM and PM rotations. In either case, expanded learning staff could be:

- Working with the group that is not currently in class.
- Supporting students in completing projects assigned in class.
- Doing innovative and engaging activities that build on the lessons taught in class.
- Doing computer science activities, theater, visual arts, or science to enrich students’ learning experiences.

### Different Grade Levels

Similarly, if districts choose to have in-school programming for younger students and continue learning at a distance for older students, out-of-school time providers could schedule in-person activities for the older students so that they have opportunities to be with peers, practice social and emotional skills, get support with their school work and have enriching activities to keep them engaged and active.

### Episodic Learning at a Distance

Should the pandemic re-emerge and require periodic learning at a distance out-of-school time providers can partner in ensuring that all students have remote access to learning and school meals, and are also maintaining connections with adults from their school communities to ensure they are safe and their families are connected to resources.

### All In-Person Instruction

Out-of-school time providers will still be essential partners in helping students readjust to the school environment and re-engage with learning.

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**To make your school’s reopening as successful as possible, we hope you will consider the following:**

- Invite out-of-school time programs to your planning discussions, involving them early so they can identify the best ways to share resources and facilities and meet the needs of all students.
- Collaborate with parents, teachers, students, and community organizations to support needs-assessment gathering.
- Establish a thoughtful distribution of resources between schools and out-of-school time programs to help alleviate budget constraints and ensure students’ academic, social, and emotional needs are met.

Students are ready to be fully engaged in academic, social, and physical spaces again, and parents (including teachers) need to return to work to keep our economy strong. It’s more important than ever for schools and out-of-school time to work together as true partners. Together we can build a more coordinated, streamlined, cost-effective model of service across the full school and work day. The best part is, our students will benefit the most.