The Afterschool and Out-of-School Time Coordinating Council

A report to the Governor, House and Senate Committee on Ways and Means, and Joint Committee on Education

Co-chairs Senator Thomas McGee and Representative Jennifer Benson
Over the years, there have been numerous studies and research showing the positive impact expanded learning opportunities (ELOs) have on children and youth. There is mounting evidence showing the positive effects of ELOs. Furthermore, there are many funding streams in Massachusetts that help deliver these vital services to children, families and communities before school, after school, and during the summer months. But in order to continue these successes more must be done to coordinate state and federal funding and build comprehensive and manageable policy.

At the ASOST Coordinating Council’s first meeting, Terry Peterson, the board Chair of the Afterschool Alliance and leading researcher of the field, told our group, “With this Council in Massachusetts, you have a real opportunity to implement change never before seen in this country.” Since the first meeting of the Coordinating Council, we have worked to see Terry’s words through to fruition. While there is still a lot of work to be done, we believe we have made considerable progress toward our goals.

Everyday, over 270,000 school age children and youth are left alone afterschool and during the summer months. This lack of programming has led to gaps in opportunities and achievement. With the growing number of duel income families and single parents in the state we know that the need for this programming is increasing and that the demand far surpasses the current supply. We must ensure that all of the Commonwealth’s young people have appealing opportunities to engage in positive relationships with adults and their peers, and to learn and develop their potential during the non-school hours.

Per M.G.L. Chapter 254 of the Acts of 2012, the Afterschool and Out of School Time Coordinating Council is to annually prepare a progress report concerning the council’s activities and make recommendations concerning Out-of-School Time (OST) programs. This document will serve as this report and shall provide you with a comprehensive update on the direction the Council has taken. Please feel free to contact either of our offices with any questions.

We know that a prosperous and hopeful future depends largely on how we prepare the next generation for adulthood. When we support the healthy development of our young people, we are safeguarding our society by helping our children and youth become productive, responsible, and invested community members.

Sincerely,

Senator Thomas McGee
Co-chair

Representative Jennifer Benson
Co-chair
Established in 2012, the Governor’s After School and Out-of-School Time (ASOST) Coordinating Council is a fifteen member council tasked with researching resources and evidence based strategies that best support children and youth in the Commonwealth during their out-of-school hours.

A recommendation of the Special Commission on After School and out of School Time in 2006, the Coordinating Council is charged with articulating a coordinated state-wide vision for expanded learning opportunities (ELO) that support students socially, emotionally and academically. In year two of its initial four year operating period, the Council seeks to enable state-wide change and systems improvement by developing new tools, educating communities on ASOST, and supporting new research.

Guided by the research of the ASOST Commission, the Coordinating Council is tasked with development and implementation of policies that build a foundation for collaboration, partnerships, and enrichment of the youth of Massachusetts. The following five charges were provided to guide the Coordinating Council in its policy recommendations.

1. The **ALIGNMENT** of efforts between the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

2. **PROMOTING COLLABORATION** and strengthening coordination between school districts and community-based afterschool and out-of-school time programs.

3. **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT** in the afterschool and out-of-school time workforce including enhancing opportunities for professional development and technical assistance.

4. **INCREASING ACCESS** for children and families to high quality afterschool and out-of-school time programming.

5. **SUSTAINABILITY** by encouraging both public and private investments in afterschool and out-of-school time programming.

**APPOINTMENTS**

Sen. Thomas McGee - Massachusetts Senate  
Rep. Jennifer Benson - Massachusetts House of Representatives  
Mr. Andre Ravenelle Superintendent - Fitchburg Public Schools  
Mr. John Swanson - MA Department of Early Education and Care  
Ms. Karyl Resnick - MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Ms. Susan Stelk - MA Department of Children and Families  
Ms. Winnie Hagen - MA Department of Higher Education  
Mr. Craig Andrade - MA Department of Public Health  
Ms. Shelly Quezada - Board of Library Commissioners  
Ms. Kathleen Magrane - Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership  
Ms. Sheryl Adlin - South Shore Stars  
Ms. Linda Saris - Salem Cyberspace  
Ms. Sarah Link - United Way of Massachusetts  
Mr. Robert O’Dwyer - Parent  
Mr. Kosta Karamanakis - Governor’s Youth Council

To reach the goals outlined in the general law the Coordinating Council split itself into three smaller working groups – Public Understanding, System Improvement, and Collaborative Approaches. These groups will identify and research specific policy recommendations to be delivered to policymakers in the legislature and state departments. Each group is designed to give the members a more in-depth look at varying opportunities across the state.
WAITLIST: There are 16,389 school-age children on EEC’s current waitlist, making up 42.5% of the department’s waitlist.

FREE/REDUCED LUNCH: 353,265 (37%) students in 400 (99%) School Districts receive free lunch/reduced lunch. While 93 (23%) of School Districts have 50% or more children (222,529 students) on free lunch/reduced lunch.

LEFT UNATTENDED: 26% of Massachusetts’ children are responsible for taking care of themselves after school. These children spend an average of 8 hours unsupervised.

MUCH NEEDED FUNDS (FY2013)

- ASOST-QE: $3,809,592 requested - $1,410,000 allocated
- 21st CCLC- Exemplary: $5,241,026 requested - $3,166,631 allocated
- 21st CCLC: $10,215,751 requested - $5,561,387 allocated

ECONOMIC BENEFITS: Parents miss an average of five days of work per year due to a lack of afterschool programming. Decreased worker productivity related to parental concerns about after school care costs businesses up to $300 billion per year.

THERE IS A NEED: Just over 1 million public school students in MA. 40% come from low-income homes.

ALIGNMENT OF FUNDING STREAMS – Funds for expanded learning opportunities come from many different sources. The Coordinating Council is researching ways to align budget line items to better benefit children and youth. Currently, there is little coordination between departments when identifying grantees. Leveraging state resources for joint development of policy for children and youth in out-of-school time programs is imperative.
Much of the Council’s work has taken place through working groups. The Council is divided into three smaller groups – Public Understanding, System Improvement, and Collaborative Approaches – to identify and research specific policy recommendations. Each group is responsible for submitting recommendations to the whole Council for their approval.

While the three working groups work independently in-between meetings, the work of the groups aligns during the full Coordinating Council meetings which happen quarterly. During each full meeting, each working group supplies a brief report to the whole body about the progress made and any changes for the future. Below is an overview of the Working Group information and potential strategies.

PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING WORKING GROUP

The Public Understanding working group analyzed recent research and literary reviews on ways to identify and educate the public on expanded learning opportunities that occur before-school afterschool, and during the summer months. As it moves forward, the public understanding working group has identified preliminary goals, barriers, and potential strategies. The most prevalent issues impacting the work ahead appears to be an inherent misunderstanding of the critical role afterschool, OST, and summer programs play in a comprehensive educational framework.

STRATEGIES

- Develop a definition for expanded learning opportunities to be used by all state departments.
- Create an ELO department/division to oversee out-of-school programming across the state.
- Invest in statewide collaboratives to expand public understanding and foster business, community based organizations (CBOs), and school partnerships.
- Ensure the integration of complimentary learning opportunities into the state’s educational framework and priorities.
- Implement a multi-media campaign to increase public understanding.

SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT WORKING GROUP

The Systems Improvements working group looked across the broad spectrum of expanded learning opportunities and how best to improve sustainability, access, and system capacity. They heard testimony from experts in the education field and engaged in conversations with key stakeholders. In light of these meetings, the group saw the benefit of creating a strong infrastructure that CBOs and school districts can flourish within.

STRATEGIES

- Build sustainable funding networks to have long last affects.
- Develop system capacity for flexible funding streams allowing school districts and CBO’s to address unique needs and challenges facing families, children, and youth.
- Quality standards and consistent regulations across sectors.
- Develop a unified holistic approach to addressing transportation challenges.
COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES WORKING GROUP

The Collaborative Approaches working group sought out to explore the relationships between schools, businesses, CBO’s and OST providers. The group found partnerships to be a rudimentary part of any educational framework. Amongst the various stakeholders, the relationship between the schools and providers was the most important. The group reached out to experts in the field and determined the best route to achieve a higher level of collaboration was data sharing. Data sharing between schools and CBO’s is a developing research field but one that has much to offer.

STRATEGIES

• Develop a statewide data sharing model to be used by districts allowing data exchange between CBO’s and schools.
• Develop a comprehensive data privacy plan to ensure children and youth are protected throughout the state.
• Conduct a pilot study to determine the efficacy of data sharing relative to youth development.

ISSUE BRIEFING

On April 2nd 2014, The Co-chairs of the ASOST Coordinating Council hosted an issue briefing on expanded learning opportunities. The Co-chairs aimed to introduce new and relevant research on the impact of afterschool and out-of-school time opportunities to the Legislature. The Issue Briefing was attended by an unprecedented number of stakeholders representing the legislature, schools, community providers researchers and advocates.

The briefing highlighted recent research from Deborah Vandell, one of the leading experts in the ELO field. Her research shows that OST programming is essential to closing the achievement and opportunity gaps. It further shows that OST programs yielded positive social behaviors, reduced conduct issues and significantly reduced drug use and increased test scores, grades, and school attendance.

The Co-chairs released their first recommendation of the year during the briefing. Using the research and noting the social, emotional, and academic gains of children in quality afterschool programs, the Co-chairs recommended increasing funds to grants that directly benefit children and youth, specifically the Quality Enhancements in Afterschool and Out-of-School Time grant (line item 7061-9611) This cost effective grant brings a quality, dedicated funding to afterschool programs rooted in strong school-community partnerships to improve the lives of children and youth across Massachusetts.
NEXT STEPS

While much has been accomplished by the Council thus far, there is more work to be done in order for the Co-chairs to bring innovative and collaborative policy recommendations to the Legislature that support children and youth. More than a decade of research confirms that quality afterschool programs inspire and motivate children to learn, support children's social and emotional growth, and help raise their academic achievement. In early 2015, the Legislature can expect comprehensive and detailed policy recommendations from the Council aimed at ensuring children and youth throughout the Commonwealth have access to high quality expanded learning opportunities.

TIMELINE

The Coordinating Council and its leadership aspire to achieve a common understanding of how the various approaches of expanded learning, including time, place and content are all necessary in order to address the specific needs of our young people at every stage of their development. They further seek to put forth cost effective and collaborative approaches that help the Commonwealth thrive. This report is the first step in ensuring that the best thinking and collective impact of school and community stakeholders is made available in an effort to create a sustainable and quality infrastructure for our children and youth. We invite others to join us in this work and if you have questions or comments, please contact the offices of the ASOST Coordinating Council Co-chairs at:

Senator Thomas McGee: 617-722-1350

Representative Jennifer Benson: 617-722-2430
Support for the research and development of this report was provided by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, the Barr Foundation, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and the United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley. This report was prepared by Patrick Stanton of the Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership in collaboration with the leadership of the Afterschool and Out-of-School Time Coordinating Council.