

# THE OHIO AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK'S COMMENTS ON ODE'S ESSA FULL DRAFT PLAN



Chair Cupp, Ranking Member Sykes and members of the Joint Education Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today regarding the Every Student Succeeds Act. My name is Nichelle Harris, and I am the Director of the Ohio After School Network.

The Ohio Afterschool Network (or OAN) is an organization of over 1500 stakeholders working together throughout the state of Ohio. Our work directly impacts youth in Afterschool and Summer Learning programs in rural, suburban and urban areas. We address issues that affect youth and families in all communities, such as food insecurity, truancy, college and career readiness, youth crime and violence, health and wellness and academic success. Our network is composed of people from many backgrounds, all dedicated to helping create more opportunities for children and youth to succeed.

A committee of Ohio Afterschool Network members convened to collect ideas and to draft language as a response to ODE's request for feedback on the Ohio Consolidated ESSA Plan. OAN has enjoyed a collaborative relationship with the Ohio Department of Education for years, working closely them on sustainability and to provide the Expanded Learning Summit conference for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) programs. We will submit our comments to them in this continued spirit of collaboration. Today I am honored to also be able to share those comments with you.

Let's begin by first examining the section discussing an Aligned System of Accountability, Support and Improvement, which includes report card measures and long term state goals.

Due to the ambitious nature of the state's long term Prepared For Success Standard goals referenced on page 15 of the Consolidated Plan, it will be critical for districts to use all strategies available. A close partnership with high-quality Afterschool programs will allow schools to capitalize on the proven outcomes of Afterschool as low-cost strategies and willing partners to support the achievement of these goals.

High quality Afterschool programs provide targeted, evidence based practices in reading and math and use research-based practices to help close the achievement gaps that exist for students due to lack of income, race, ethnicity or disability, or who have English as their second language. Afterschool focuses on increasing graduation rate by providing opportunities for college and career exploration, credentialing, and expanded access to and support for credit recovery programs.

In particular, studies show the participation of at-risk students in Afterschool programs improves the non-academic indicators, chronic absenteeism and student discipline incidents, identified for monitoring in the state's Consolidated Plan on page 13. Students in high-quality Afterschool programs have better attendance, behavior, grades and test scores compared to their non-participating peers. Research shows that kids in Afterschool programs go to school more, see improvements in their behavior, and increase their likelihood of moving on to the next grade level and graduating.

Afterschool programs also provide safety and supervision, while linking kids with mentors who discourage negative risky youth behaviors, such as aggression and drug and alcohol use.



## The Ohio Afterschool Network

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In regards to the section on Schools and Districts Identified For Support, as stakeholders in education OAN members feel strongly that the state's continuum of support for struggling schools should be directed toward students, as opposed to schools, and should include well-coordinated efforts with outside-of-school educational resources, including Afterschool.

Where Afterschool programs exist, school districts should work collaboratively with programs to ensure that strategies such as PBIS and Collaborating States Initiative with CASEL are consistent before, during and after school.

Pilot districts for Ohio's Early Literacy Plan should be encouraged to use Afterschool programs to support their plan. Afterschool programs, in particular 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs, utilize student-focused, evidenced-based early literacy instruction to increase reading outcomes for underperforming students.

Afterschool programs should be cited as a resource to help support our youngest learners who are transitioning from early childhood to elementary school, as referenced on page 87 of the Consolidated Plan.

I'd like to speak next about the section on creating an Aligned Evidence Based Improvement System, including, Direct Student Services, Title I Schoolwide Waivers, Supporting Rural Schools, Dropout Prevention and Recovery, and English Learners.

Afterschool programs are a proven strategy to address attendance, credit recovery and drop-out prevention and should be one of the Department's strategies to close the gap and improve the graduation rate for students.

On page 89 of the Consolidated Plan, districts failing to meet certain gap closing thresholds may be instructed by the Department to utilize Title 1 dollars to support early learning and early grades, Afterschool programs should be cited as a strategy to support districts in closing that gap.

Investing in Afterschool programs helps children of rural communities break out of the cycle of poverty and creates opportunities for at-risk youth. In areas where prospects and resources are limited, Afterschool programs are often the only source of supplemental enrichment in literacy, nutrition education, technology, and preparation for college entrance exams. Afterschool programs offer an effective and affordable way of overcoming obstacles confronting rural communities and helping children realize their full potential.

The work of a school teacher is a challenging, technical, time consuming job; it is also an important and impactful one. As an additional support for reinforcing academic concepts, teachers should collaborate with Afterschool programs to align academics in the classroom with activities in the Afterschool program. High quality Afterschool programs can extend learning time and can align academic enrichment activities to the classroom when teachers support those efforts. Afterschool programs can also be a resource for finding potential teachers, as well as resources for principals looking to develop a community that supports the educational priorities of the local schools.



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In addressing the educator shortage, as discussed on pages 71 and 72 of the Consolidated Plan, districts that are piloting educator preparation programs should consider utilizing 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC academic intervention program staff, most of whom are college or post-graduate level educators on the path to a career in education.

21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs require certified teachers to provide targeted academic intervention. Local Resident Educator Programs, cited on page 76 of the Consolidate Plan, establish the specific activities required for teachers participating in this program and determine the policies and procedures for documenting activities. Providing targeted academic intervention in 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs should be considered an activity to be recognized for a teacher participating in a Local Resident Educator Program.

On pages 73 and 74 of the Consolidated Plan, the Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession and Ohio's Standards for Principals are discussed. The Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession indicate under Standard 6 that educators are encouraged to communicate and collaborate with students, parents, other educators, administrators and the community. Afterschool program staff would also be excellent collaborative partners for teachers and should be considered as such. Afterschool program staff interact with students, their parents, other educators, administrators and the community on a daily basis.

Ohio's Standards for Principals indicate under Standard 5 that principals should include parents and community members in the educational process and create an environment where community resources support student learning, achievement and well-being. Afterschool programs are also excellent partners for principals and should be considered as such. Afterschool program staff collaborate with community agencies to access to programs and resources to deal with students' non-academic barriers and provide resources to students' families to deal with issues that put students at risk.

The draft ESSA plan requires, "...a systemic approach to address all conditions for learning, including non-academic indicators such as a safe and supportive school climate, positive behavioral intervention and supports, social emotional learning and family, school and community partnerships." Ohio's Afterschool programs, and 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs in particular, are designed to address all of these conditions for learning and should be acknowledged among the strategies to provide a well- rounded, well supported education for all students.

Ohio's 21st CCLC programs support the implementation of additional learning time through out-of-school time (OST) programming. Ohio's 21st CCLC programs help close proficiency/opportunity gaps, increase student engagement, support social and emotional learning, and promote college and career readiness and success.

Ohio's 21st CCLC programs offer well-rounded educational experiences to all students, including low-income students who are often underrepresented in critical and enriching subjects, which may include: high-quality STEM initiatives, activities and programs in music and the arts, and other courses, activities, or programs that contribute to a well-rounded education.

Ohio's 21st CCLC programs support safe and healthy students by establishing learning environments and enhancing students' effective learning skills that are essential for school readiness and academic success by providing integrated systems of student and family supports. Ohio's 21st CCLC programs instructional practices provide learning experiences for students that build student's skills and enhance student's effective learning skills.

Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to share comments with you today.



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