



## Vermont's Landscape for Expanded Learning

**A**s a society, it is our job to ensure that the future is in good hands. That means making sure that our young people have access to a full range of opportunities throughout their childhood. When young people have opportunities to be positively engaged in their schools and communities, they are more likely to develop into healthy and productive citizens and leaders. Children spend on average 1,000 hours a year in school but 5,000 in their communities and with their families. How they spend this time can facilitate positive development and growth experiences, or place them at risk for negative outcomes.

It is increasingly recognized that high-quality afterschool programs help children and youth develop into healthy, productive members of society. Afterschool programs that promote personal and social skills are consistently successful in producing multiple benefits for youth including improvements in children's personal, social, and academic skills.<sup>1</sup> Studies have shown that when compared with their peers, children and youth who attend high-quality afterschool programs report good relations with friends, healthy emotional adjustment, stronger conflict resolution skills, and better grades and behavior in school.<sup>2</sup>

Strong afterschool and expanded learning opportunities benefit families and communities as well. In addition to creating jobs in local communities, after-

school programs provide an important support for Vermont's working families. Programs keep kids active, engaged, and safe, and by doing so they help to also alleviate stress and worry when children are out of school and parents, guardians, and other family members are working.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout Vermont, afterschool programs play an important role in connecting schools and communities. Programs offer children and youth the opportunity to move beyond traditional classroom activity and engage with their surrounding neighborhoods, organizations, businesses, and individuals in meaningful and innovative ways.<sup>4</sup> According to Corporate Voices for Working Families, "Quality after school programs provide a unique venue in which young people can develop the range of skills they need to enter the 21st century workplace."<sup>5</sup>

In an effort to better understand the scope of offerings available to children and youth across Vermont during non-school hours, the Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence conducted an afterschool and expanded learning mapping project aimed at identifying where programs are located, who they are serving, how they are funded, and gaps in service that exist. The following report provides an overview of the findings and points to areas in need of attention if we are to ensure that all Vermont's children and youth have access to the opportunities that will put them on the road to success.

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## Supporting Success for Vermont Students

Several recent studies in Vermont have pointed to the important role that afterschool and expanded learning programs play in supporting Vermont students. A study by the Vermont Department of Education, *Roots of Success: Effective Practices in Vermont Schools*, identifies effective afterschool and summer programs as one of the key strategies used by successful schools.<sup>6</sup> A report by Voices for Vermont's Children also notes the important role that quality afterschool and summer learning programs can play in providing supports that help to address Vermont's poverty-based proficiency gap in student achievement.<sup>7</sup>

Through our research and work with programs, we have seen how schools and communities in Vermont are using time outside the school day to support student success in a number of key ways:

- **Tutoring.** Afterschool programs often work closely with schools to use the time available outside the regular school day to tutor students in need of extra help. Over the last two years, Vermont's 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) programs have looked at school-based tutoring programs, such as that run in Winooski's JFK Elementary School, as models to be replicated across the state.<sup>8</sup> Professional development opportunities and online resources aimed at program replication are currently available and the number of programs offering school-linked tutoring services has increased.<sup>9</sup>
- **Project-based Learning.** Afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs throughout Vermont take advantage of flexible schedules, connections with the community, and the ability to take learning outside the classroom walls to use project-based learning to help students develop 21st Century skills. Effective programs combine skill development, exploration, and opportunities for mastery. To support programs in these efforts, the National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning has developed an extensive online resource for creating engaging and enriching project-based experiences in afterschool and summer.<sup>10</sup>
- **Summer Learning.** Nationally, educators, researchers, and policy makers alike are recognizing the importance of effective summer learning programs in addressing summer learning loss and providing access to enriching summer activities for all students.<sup>11</sup> In the last two years, the Ver-

mont Department of Education has used funding from the 21st CCLC Program and from the US Office of Juvenile Justice and Prevention to run targeted grant competitions to increase summer learning programs in the state.

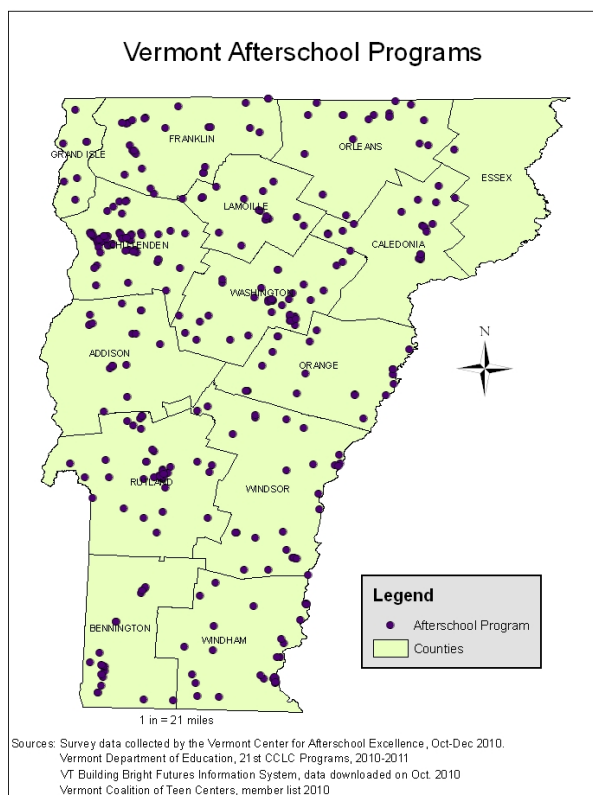
- **Youth Engagement.** Quality afterschool programs place a strong emphasis on supporting youth voice and engagement and helping students to build healthy and supportive relationships with peers and adults. During the 2010-2011 school year, selected Vermont afterschool programs are participating in a statewide pilot of the Youth Program Quality Assessment Intervention (YPQI). Developed and supported by the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, this program assessment tool and improvement process focuses on developing strong programs that support students in four ways: Safe Environment; Supportive Environment; Peer Interaction; and Youth Engagement.<sup>12</sup>
- **Providing Food and Other Supports.** In Vermont, licensed school age care afterschool programs and 21st CCLC programs are required to provide students with healthy food and snacks when in operation after school and during the summer. The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides funds to afterschool programs in low-income districts to provide snacks and/or suppers to children ages 18 and younger. In addition, many programs offer other support services by connecting with or employing school guidance counselors, social workers, home-school liaisons, language interpretation services, and mental health services.



## Mapping the Programs

Through the mapping project, we were able to identify a total of 358 programs in Vermont offering comprehensive and consistent afterschool and expanded learning opportunities.<sup>13</sup> The identified programs serve a wide range of students from preschool through high school. Most offer services during the typical afterschool hours (3-6pm) but many also include additional options, such as before school programming, weekend and evening hours, school vacation camps, and summer programs. The data for the mapping project was collected from a number of sources.<sup>14</sup> Figure 1 shows the distribution of programs by county.

Figure 1



February 2011

A number of different types of afterschool and expanded learning programs exist. Figure 2 shows a breakdown of programs into five commonly recognized program types: (1) Licensed school age care afterschool programs; (2) 21st Century Community Learning Center Programs (21st CCLC); (3) Boys & Girls Clubs; (4) YMCA Afterschool Sites; and (5) Teen Centers. While programs may be listed in more than one category above, collecting data from

each of these areas will encompass most of the programs in the state.

Figure 2

Program Type	Number in VT
Total # of Afterschool Programs in Vermont	358
Licensed School Age Care Programs	235
21st CCLC Programs	121
Boys & Girls Club Sites	23
YMCA Program Sites	31
Teen Centers	43
Note: The above categories are not mutually exclusive	

According to Vermont's Building Bright Futures Information System, there are 235 licensed school age care afterschool programs recognized by Vermont's Department of Children and Families.<sup>15</sup> Licensed school age care programs serve children ages 5 up to 13 in the afterschool hours with a particular focus on providing child care in support of working families. If attending a licensed afterschool program, eligible families can apply for child care financial assistance (also known as child care subsidy). Payments are made directly to afterschool care providers.

21st CCLC programs are those schools and organizations currently receiving funding from the Vermont Department of Education (VTDOE) through 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) grants for afterschool and summer learning programs. This federal funding source targets high-need, high-poverty areas (at least 30% of the student population eligible for free/reduced priced lunch). In FY10, Vermont received \$5.7 million in federal funds for the 21st CCLC programs. VTDOE uses these funds to award 3-5 year grants through a competitive process. Currently, there are 121 21st CCLC-funded program sites in Vermont.

Boys & Girls Clubs and YMCA sites are included as separate categories in this mapping project because of their national affiliations. Teen Centers makes up the final category. In Vermont, teen centers are not regulated or overseen by a particular agency or department; however, many teen centers are members of the Vermont Coalition of Teen Centers, a statewide network for collaboration and support.

The categories of program type are not mutually exclusive. For instance, currently 43 licensed programs also receive 21st CCLC funding, and depending on the ages served and program location, Boys & Girls Clubs and the YMCA sites can be licensed and/or receive 21st CCLC funds as well.

## Programs at a Glance

In fall 2010, the Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence sent an invitation to all identified afterschool programs in Vermont asking them to participate in a statewide survey on afterschool programming. The survey tool was designed to collect additional information about the type of program run, hours of operations, ages of students served, program capacity, funding sources, and program challenges. Out of the 358 programs contacted, 160 survey responses were collected resulting in a completion rate of 44%.

Programs responding to the statewide survey on afterschool report the following:

- **Students Served.** In total, across the 160 programs responding to the survey, more than 11,000 students are being served during the course of the year. The Afterschool Alliance estimates the total number of students participating in afterschool programs in Vermont to be over 20,000 each year.<sup>16</sup>
- **Program Size.** The smallest number of students being served at a single site is three while the largest site in the survey reports serving more than 1,000 students during the course of the year. The median number of participants served at a Vermont afterschool program site is 60 students.
- **Average Daily Attendance.** The average daily attendance during the school year at the programs surveyed is 30 students with a minimum program size of three students each day and a maximum program size of approximately 100 students per day.
- **Hours of Operation.** Afterschool programs typically run 2-3 hours/day for four or five days per week, usually between the hours of 3:00-6:00pm. However, many programs identified in this project run programming that extends beyond the traditional afterschool hours.
- **Before School Programming.** In addition to programming afterschool, approximately 19% of the programs surveyed also offer before school programming. Typically, before school programming includes breakfast, homework support, and a safe place to wait for school to start when families need to leave earlier for work.
- **Weekends and Vacations.** A little over 6% of the programs surveyed offer programming on the weekends, while almost 30% are open on teacher in-service days and school vacations.
- **Summer Learning.** Almost 70% of the survey respondents report that they also offer programming in the summer. The average daily attendance across summer programs is 35 students. Summer programs can run anywhere from three hours a day for one or two weeks up to eight to ten hours a day for eight or nine weeks. In order to best address summer learning loss, the National Summer Learning Association recommends that communities and schools offer summer programs with the duration and intensity of a 6-week, full-day model.<sup>17</sup> Although Vermont has a high rate of programs running in the summer, few meet this standard for duration and intensity.
- **Ages of Students Served.** On average, 80% of all reporting afterschool programs stated that they serve students grades Pre-K through 6. This number drops to less than half (45%) reporting serving middle school students (grades 7 and 8), and only 14% serving high school students. Effective afterschool programming for older youth requires special considerations in format, staffing, and content.<sup>18</sup> Several years ago, the Vermont Department of Education supported a professional learning community for directors of high school afterschool programs, and, more recently, a study of best practices in Vermont's middle school programs led to the development of a framework for middle school afterschool programs based on five components: relationships, relevance, reinforcement, real-life projects, and rigor.<sup>19</sup> However, the challenge of building vibrant programs for older youth with sustained participation rates still exists, especially in Vermont's small, rural communities.



## Challenges Faced by Programs

In order to get a better understanding of current challenges facing afterschool and expanded learning programs in Vermont, the statewide afterschool survey included a section that asked directors to identify key challenges facing their program. Respondents were able to choose more than one area of concern and a summary of reported responses is given in Figure 3. The top four “challenge” areas identified by programs are: (1) Funding; (2) Parental Involvement; (3) Transportation; and (4) Staffing.

- **Funding.** Out of the 160 completed surveys, two-thirds (66%) of all respondents indicated that funding was an ongoing challenge for their program. Public/Private Ventures and The Finance Project recently partnered on extensive research and analysis of how afterschool programs across the country are funded. Their report found that the full cost of quality afterschool programs during the school year ranged as follows: (1) from \$3 to \$9 per hour (or \$14 to \$31 per day) per slot for programs serving elementary and middle school children; and (2) from \$4 to \$12 per hour (or \$15 to \$49 per day) per slot for programs serving teens (including middle school, high school, or some combination of the two).<sup>20</sup> The averages were \$24 per day for elementary programs and \$33 per day for teen programs.

The next section of this report goes into further detail on the funding landscape in Vermont and how programs are utilizing various sources to create viable funding structures.

- **Parental Involvement.** The second highest area of concern was parental involvement with 39% of responses noting this concern. The Harvard Family Research Project offers support and resources to programs looking to build stronger family engagement through their guide *Focus on Families! How to Build and Support Family-Centered Practices in After-School*.<sup>21</sup> Programs in Vermont can also find additional support from the Vermont Family Network (VFN) and the Parent Information and Resource Center of Vermont (PIRC– Vermont). This past year the Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence added a representative from PIRC-Vermont to the partnership board and we are looking at increasing supports in this area.
- **Transportation.** Transportation in getting children to and from the programs was a high concern (33%) and speaks

to the issue of access. In Vermont, 21st CCLC grantees are required to address transportation and access issues for all students and may need to provide buses. During the 2009-2010 school year, 21st CCLC programs budgeted for an average of \$4,000/year per site for transportation. Programs use a variety of options to help to meet transportation needs and provide access to programs, including: school buses, city buses, vans, taxis, and carpools.

- **Staffing.** Staffing concerns also rated high for about a third of the directors (31%). Positions in many afterschool and summer programs are largely part-time positions and the turnover rate can be quite high. Nationally, studies have estimated the staff turnover rate in afterschool programs to be as high as 40%.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the qualifications of staff working in afterschool can vary greatly even within a single program site. Afterschool programs employ certified teachers, school personnel, paraeducators, youth workers, community members, local artists or other subject experts, and high school and college students. In Vermont, staff in licensed afterschool programs are required to meet certain educational and experience criteria depending on their position in the program. VTDOE also collects staffing information from 21st CCLC programs. In 2009-2010, 33% of afterschool staff during the school year in 21st CCLC programs in Vermont were certified teachers also serving as classroom teachers during the school day.<sup>23</sup>

**Figure 3**

Reported Challenges	Percentage of Sites*
Funding	65.6%
Parental Involvement	39.4%
Transportation	33.1%
Staffing	30.6%
Volunteers	29.4%
Community Partnerships	25.0%
Training	20.0%
Program Evaluation	13.1%
Program Management	10.6%
* n= 160 Programs Reporting	

Source: Vermont Afterschool 2010 Program Director Survey

## Funding for Programs

A number of different federal funding sources are available and can be used to fund afterschool and summer learning programs. However, the only federal funding source dedicated solely to afterschool programming is the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program (21st CCLC). Vermont's allocation for 21st CCLC in FY10 was \$5.7 million. 21st CCLC grants must be awarded competitively, run for 3-5 years, and cannot be less than \$50,000/year. For this reason, smaller sites in Vermont are encouraged to apply together and many of Vermont's 21st CCLC grants are awarded to supervisory unions or school districts and cover multiple sites/schools. Almost 60% of the programs participating in the fall survey reported receiving funding through 21st CCLC. The average amount of funding listed per site was approximately \$50,000/year (Figure 4).

The second major source of support reported by afterschool programs were grants from Vermont's Child Development Division (CDD). Administered through the US Depart-

ment of Health and Human Services, Vermont's allocation in FY10 for the Child Care and Development Funds (CCDF) was \$9.7 million. This funding is used primarily to provide child care assistance for eligible low-income families (children ages birth to 13). Vermont's Child Development Division is required to set aside 4% of CCDF funds each year to support quality initiatives. Programs can apply for a Quality Improvement Grant (max: \$5,000/year) or a one-time Program Startup Grant (max: \$15,000/year). Approximately, 18% of survey respondents reported receiving grant funds from the CDD. The average amount of funding received was \$7,500/year.<sup>24</sup>

Fees paid by parents and families also play a strong role in supporting programs. Over 71% of programs surveyed reported using fee income to run their programs. The average amount of income generated from fees was \$13,000/year per site. Many programs offer sliding fee scales, discounts for multiple siblings, and/or financial scholarships for eligible students.

In addition to fee income, 42% of survey respondents also noted that fundraisers were a regular part of the funding plan. The average collected each year through fund raisers was just short of \$5,000 per site.

Almost 28% of survey respondents reported receiving city and/or county funds to support their program. The average amount of city/county funding received was \$7,000/year. A 2008 study of 21st CCLC programs in Vermont and how they are sustaining their programs over time found that over \$1.1 million in local funding (through town and school budgets) was going to support 21st CCLC afterschool and summer programs.<sup>25</sup> 21st CCLC programs are required to show program sustainability over time and programs that have received 21st CCLC dollars for over five years are expected to be sustaining at least 50% of their total program budget with other funding sources.

Survey respondents also reported receiving funding contributions from local businesses (28%) and from community-based organizations (25%). However, this funding was limited with an average annual contribution from businesses of \$1,438 and an average annual contribution from community-based organizations of \$1,722.

The final category reported on was Foundations. Depending on the particular foundation reported, up to almost 20% of the programs received funds from these sources. The average foundation amount ranged from less than \$1,000 to \$30,000/year.

**Figure 4**

Funding Source	Percentage of Sites*	Average Amount
21st CCLC (VTDOE)	58.9%	\$48,612.88
Child Development Division Grant	17.9%	\$7,515.91
City and/or County Funds	27.8%	\$7,142.41
Businesses	27.8%	\$1,437.50
Faith-Based Organizations	2.0%	<i>na</i>
Community-Based Organizations	25.2%	\$1,722.22
Other Civic Organizations	3.3%	<i>na</i>
Private Donors	21.9%	\$5,250.00
Parent Fees	71.5%	\$13,258.69
Fundraisers	42.4%	\$4,995.99
Vermont Children's Trust Foundation	19.2%	\$1,689.21
A.D. Henderson Foundation	6.6%	\$30,000.00
The Agnes M. Lindsay Trust	2.6%	<i>na</i>
The Thomas Thompson Trust	2.0%	<i>na</i>
Turrell Fund	11.3%	\$12,200.00
Vermont Community Foundation	13.2%	\$714.29
Windham Foundation	2.0%	<i>na</i>
* n=160 programs reporting		

Source: Vermont Afterschool 2010 Program Director Survey

## Policy Implications

Afterschool and expanded learning programs allow for resources and time to be used more flexibly and focused on where students need it most. This time can be used to work with smaller groups or even one-on-one with students in ways that are not possible during the regular classroom day. Changing the setting for learning, changing the timing and methods of instruction, and making learning more personalized to meet the needs of individual students is possible in afterschool and expanded learning programs.

While a number of different program types exist, we need to look at issues of access for all students, the level and types of supports being offered in programs, and how to strengthen connections between school day staff and curriculum and afterschool and summer learning programs.

We need to see collaboration across agencies, especially the Vermont Department of Education and the Department of Children and Families in the Agency of Human Services. We need to develop common definitions of program quality that address educational goals as well as principles of youth development. In order to better understand the extent and outcomes of programs, we need better data systems that cross agencies and program type and that connect to larger statewide longitudinal data efforts.

We need regional models that bring programs together collaboratively, such as that started by the Burlington Citywide Afterschool Coalition. Our data has also shown us that programs are asking for support for family engagement and assistance in building strong staffing and volunteer structures. In addressing key issues such as the achievement gap, we need to look at connections with social services and other supports that could be provided outside the school day in conjunction with afterschool and expanded learning programs.

Vermont has not dedicated a stable and consistent funding source for afterschool or summer programming. The bulk of funding comes from the federal government, local schools and towns, community partners, family fees, childcare financial assistance, and charitable foundations. Because we do not allocate funding, we have little information about the “state of expanded learning opportunities” in Vermont. One way to address some of these questions would be to create an expanded learning opportunities study group or task force.

The purpose of said task force could be to conduct a comprehensive study and make recommendations for:



- Increasing school linkages with expanded learning, afterschool, and summer programs;
- Increasing coordination between school-based afterschool and summer learning programs and programs sponsored by community-based organizations;
- Determining alternative approaches to deliver traditional expanded learning, tutoring, and summer school programs;
- Looking at cross-agency communication and collaboration, especially around program quality and monitoring and data collection;
- Identifying the key elements of expanded learning, afterschool, and summer learning that should be addressed at a public policy level in order to:
  - ◇ Eliminate summer learning loss and address the achievement gap;
  - ◇ Contribute to more effective school-year approaches to educating underserved learners in Vermont;
  - ◇ Determine how a more comprehensive statewide strategy might be implemented over time; and
  - ◇ Identify how best to coordinate existing funding streams for expanded learning, afterschool, and summer learning programs.

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- 10 National Partnership for Quality Afterschool Learning. (2008). *Afterschool Training Toolkit: Building Quality Enrichment Activities*. Available online at <http://www.sedl.org/pubs/catalog/items/fam110.html>.
- 11 Miller, B. (2007). *The Learning Season: The Untapped Power of Summer to Advance Student Achievement*. Nellie Mae Education Foundation, 2007.
- 12 David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality. <http://www.cypq.org/>
- 13 The programs included in this report are only those that offer "comprehensive and consistent" afterschool programming. Not included in this first round of mapping are schools that offer extracurricular programs (e.g., band, sports, theatre) unless those offerings are part of a larger 21st CCLC program. Also missing are organizations that offer programming in the out-of-school time hours that is narrowly defined or specific to a particular interest or skill (e.g., martial arts programs, ski centers, dance studios, sports teams, etc.).
- 14 Information on licensed school age care programs was retrieved from the Building Bright Futures information system (October 2010). The Vermont Department of Education maintains an up-to-date list on schools and organizations running 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs. Information on teen centers, community organizations, and nationally-affiliated programs (e.g., Boys & Girls Clubs and the YMCA) and programs for older youth came from a variety of sources including the VT Coalition for Teen Centers and the websites for the national organizations.
- 15 This figure includes only licensed school age care providers, not family home providers.
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- 23 Feal-Staub, L. (2010). *21st Century Community Learning Centers Evaluation Report: Baseline Data Analysis*. A report prepared for the Vermont Department of Education, December 2010.
- 24 The total for the Child Development Division shown in the funding table only refers to grants from CDD, not to child care financial assistance or subsidy reimbursements. Available data on child care financial assistance is not broken out between early child care providers and schoolage care providers and cannot be included in this report at this time.
- 25 Bratton, D. (2009). *Total Funding Sources Excluding 21st CCLC Chart*. Working document produced for the Sustainability Professional Learning Community, Vermont's 21st CCLC Programs. Retrieved in December 2010 from <http://vermontafterschool.pbworks.com/>.

### Acknowledgements and Credits

*This report was funded through grants and support from the Charles S. Mott Foundation and the Vermont Department of Education. We thank these organizations for their support but acknowledge that the findings presented in this report are those of the Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the funders.*

Research: Erin Ruitenber • Research and Writing: Holly Morehouse and Lynne Feal-Staub

Special thanks to Nicole Mace, Voices for Vermont's Children, for advice and assistance in developing policy implications.

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