

Welcome

Because the term *Renaissance* delineates the historical-cultural movement that followed the Middle Ages, we have traditionally used the term *Renaissance person* to describe someone who has many accomplishments and knows something about

everything. Afterschool programs in many ways are helping to sustain a Renaissance learning model! As needed academic-focused time in schools has left less time for specialties and electives, afterschool programs have continued to contribute valuable experiences in the arts, physical activity, and hands-on science. The afterschool hours offer a fitting opportunity to introduce youth to a variety of learning domains that connect to school and career success.

I was acutely reminded of the essential role afterschool programs can play in supporting and stretching youth creativity, imagination, confidence, and skill-building at the National AfterSchool Association convention in June. Attendees were treated to an awe-inspiring original rap performance by two middle school youth from the Carolina Studios afterschool program in Charleston, SC.

This issue of *Afterschool Matters* ranges across the variety of learning domains that quality afterschool programs support. We open with “High Impact Afterschool for All: A Statewide Quality Framework,” in which Jennifer Siaca outlines the development by the New York State Afterschool Network of a set of program quality tools built to promote continuous program improvement and better support for out-of-school time programs. “Getting the Right Mix” by Christine Proffitt describes a small Massachusetts study to identify effective strategies for developing resources and sustaining funding to support youth arts programs. In “Project Exploration’s Sisters4Science: Involving Urban Girls of Color in Science Out of School,” Gabrielle Lyon and Jameela Jafri give us a comprehensive look at an afterschool program that promotes science learning for girls of color by putting girls at the center.

Since NIOST is currently engaged in several research projects focused on wellness practices in afterschool programs, we are delighted to include in this issue “Promoting Physical Activity in Afterschool Programs.” Aaron Beighle and colleagues recommend many ways that afterschool programs, even those with space and equipment limitations, can support youth wellness by facilitating physical activity. Next, in “The Arts Matter in Afterschool,” Lori Hager makes the case for advancing partnerships between afterschool programs and arts and cultural organizations.

Our final essay, “Nana for a New Generation,” comes to us from a participant in NIOST’s Afterschool Matters Fellowship. Denise Sellers shares her journey to recreate the caring community that she experienced during her own growing-up years. Now her afterschool program serves as custodian for children’s wellbeing as her Nana did. It is good to be reminded that, to achieve our own Renaissance, we all need someone to look out for us.



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