



Vermont Afterschool

Partnerships, Advocacy, Training, and Resources for Excellence in Afterschool

Quarterly Report: June 2016

This is the first summer in two years that Vermont Afterschool will not be supporting the work of a legislative working group under the PreK-16 Council. While I'll miss hearing testimony from witnesses and experts around the state and working with the thoughtful members of the Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Working Group, I'm excited to have time this summer to explore two areas of connection for the afterschool field in Vermont: (1) workforce development and (2) juvenile justice and prevention.

Last week in DC, Thara Fuller, Director of the 21C Program in Windham Central Supervisory Union, shared with congressional staff that her afterschool program has put over \$1 million back into the community through wages for staff. She also explained that her program trains and hires high school students to work in the elementary program thereby providing important work experience and some of the only job opportunities for students in their small, rural communities. The Expanded Learning Summit that we organized this past May also highlighted the connections between expanded learning opportunities and college readiness and career awareness. Studies have shown that afterschool and summer learning programs help students gain workforce skills, such as teamwork, leadership, and critical thinking. I'd like to explore these connections further.

This past month I also attended a workshop while at a national conference where a senior police officer shared why his department has put significant time and effort into supporting the afterschool programs in their city. The police department supports officers in working in the program on a regular basis because they see the real value in building relationships with the youth. Since instituting the partnership, they've also seen a reduction in juvenile crime. As a statewide network we have not yet talked enough in Vermont about these connections and I'm interested in exploring deeper partnerships with the law enforcement community.

What are you thinking about these days? Do you have ideas for projects or connections you'd like to build this summer? If there is any way that we can support you in your learning over the summer, please be sure to let us know. And if you are interested in exploring either of the topics that I mentioned above, I would enjoy having some partners to work with on our own "summer study group."

With appreciation for all that you do,

Holly Morehouse, Executive Director

Center Operations

- Congrats to board member Katie Mobley for her recent promotion! Katie is now the Executive Director of Winooski, St. Albans, and Midd Academic Centers for the Community College of Vermont (CCV).
- Congrats also to board member Vicky Smith. Vicky was awarded the 2016 Hertz Pasackow Architecture Excellence Award by the Burlington Business Association for the new King Street building. So awesome to have such a great space for kids and families!
- Welcome to Mary Stuessy, our new bookkeeper. Mary will be working one day a week at Vermont Afterschool and has transitioned seamlessly into her new role here.
- Another warm welcome to a new board member, Vicki Graf. Vicki is the principal at Jericho Elementary School and has been working with students in Vermont as a teacher and principal for 35 years. We look forward to adding her experienced perspective to our Board.
- Over the past few weeks, we took time aside to do our annual staff reflections and reviews. Core staff members met with Holly to look at highlights and challenges over the past year, as well as create individual action plans for the near future.
- Our staff has worked together to suggest updates for Vermont Afterschool's Employee Handbook, which will need to be approved by the Board of Directors. The handbook has not been updated since 2013 when we incorporated as a 501(c)3 and needs some changes as our organization has grown since then.
- In early May, Erin attended the Northeast Arc User Group's annual spring conference in Amherst, MA. The event was for users of geographic information system (GIS) software. Erin was able to attend interactive workshops to improve her map-making skills and learn about new developments in the field. She'll be able to apply these skills to future maps showing the extent of quality and access to expanded learning opportunities in Vermont.

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- Karen Scott attended the National Afterschool Convention in Orlando as Vermont's State Affiliate. She facilitated a session at the Affiliate Meeting designed to identify professional development priorities for the states. The conference keynote included Angela Duckworth, who spoke about the importance of resilience and "grit" in children and the role afterschool has in developing both. Karen was accompanied by Tricia Pawlik-York, project specialist for VT Afterschool.
- Cassie was asked to serve on the STEM Hub project in her role as Communications Coordinator. This is a national initiative led by the Afterschool Alliance with the goal of improving outreach and communications around the importance of STEM learning in afterschool and summer.
- Alissa Faber is working on a new project to increase our connections with non-21C, licensed afterschool and summer learning programs in Vermont. She will be holding a focus group in June to meet with licensed program directors to discuss how Vermont Afterschool can better support their work.
- In the past three months we have seen 2,470 visits to our website with 15% of users accessing the page via a mobile device (phone or tablet). Our training pages (professional development, spring training event, and the Expanded Learning Summit) were the most visited pages other than the homepage.
- Cassie has started tracking certain social media metrics to measure trends in engagement and reach. We tend to see spikes in activity around events, as well as the Zap the Campaign push. For example, we participated in an Afterschool Environmental Education Twitter Chat for Earth Day (#AfterschoolEE) and saw a noteworthy uptick in mentions, retweets, and likes. Increasing our reach means not only posting more frequently, but also tagging partners and new things to get the word out. Currently our Facebook and Twitter fans are slowly but steadily increasing: Facebook has 433 likes and Twitter has 479 followers.

Partnership Development

- We hosted the Expanded Learning Summit in partnership with Up for Learning on May 5, 2016. In total, 88 participants (including ELO providers, teachers, students, and strategic partners) convened at the Stoweflake for a day of discussion around how to include ELOs in personalized learning plans. Holly and Karen are working on a report from the data collected at the event and are looking to publish this summer.
- Karen co-authored a successful grant from the Agency of Education to develop the Expanded Learning Coalition (ELC) Project. Her co-chair is

Highlights

- The **Expanded Learning Summit** brought together a diverse group of people and partners to look at how ELOs can best support Vermont's vision for education that is flexible, personalized, student-centered, and proficiency-based. Stay tuned for the published report on the findings from the Summit!

Next Steps and Partner Points

- Read the ELO Working Group's report on PLPs here:
http://www.vermontafterschool.org/advocacy/working_group/

Paul Gambill of the Community Engagement Lab, whose signature project is the Creative Schools Initiative. Together, over the next year, the goal is to establish the ELC as a statewide entity that will create the link between ELOs, schools, and students and families. This link is extremely important as personalized learning becomes the focus of planning for students and schools, and as out-of-school learning becomes part of personalized learning plans. The Expanded Learning Summit served as the kick-off to the work of the grant over the next year.

- Emanuel Betz (VTAOE), Mary Mulloy (VTAOE), Lynne Robbins (CDD/DCF), and Fagan Hart (Vermont Children's Trust Foundation) joined Holly in Detroit for the 2016 Mott Conference. Lynne presented on panel about supporting licensed programs and Holly presented in two workshops featuring Vermont Afterschool's policy and STEM work.
- The Child Development Division, Department for Children and Families, hosted a series of four facilitated meetings about re-envisioning the early childhood workforce (with early childhood defined as birth through age 8). Holly appreciated being included in these discussions. A new contract will be issued in about six months to oversee and organize the state professional development system for early childhood. We will be looking for ways to connect with, support, and coordinate with the organization(s) taking on this work.
- Holly attended the State GEAR UP Partners Meeting in May. It was a great opportunity to hear about the work being done by other partners (such as Vermont Principals Association, UVM, CCV, the DREAM mentoring program, and the Upper Valley Business and Education Partnership). We also talked about the state GEAR UP goals and how to best support the target outcomes for students. Also in May, Karen presented a workshop about the Expanded Learning Coalition Project at the VSAC Career and Transition Conference.
- Tracy has set up an initial meeting with the UVM College of Medicine and Office of Diversity and Inclusion to explore a new STEM content partnership around Health Sciences. This is an exciting area for partnerships that could appeal to all ages of youth.
- We received positive feedback during our SWEEP Annual Partnership Review from the three key entities (Department of Fish and Wildlife, Verdana Ventures, and Winooski Valley Park District) that anchored our statewide environmental literacy partnership. We also developed plans to sustain these efforts by overlaying membership maps and partnering on professional development.
- Vermont Afterschool was featured in the Engineering is Elementary (EiE) blog in May reinforcing our long-time partnership with EiE for high-quality STEM afterschool programs that are designed for grades 3-8. Read more here: <http://blog.eie.org/vermont-afterschool-wants-to-send-more-kids-on-engineering-adventures> .
- Vermont Afterschool and the Montshire Museum co-led a full day tinkering workshop at Champlain College's Dynamic Landscapes conference. We're excited to have Montshire's agreement to extend our partnership for a third year.

Policy and Advocacy

- The Zap the Gap campaign made tremendous progress this year. Although the Appropriations Committees did not include funding for the Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Special Fund in the FY17 General Budget, we did see a number of incredible successes (see right side bar) that we count as victories. Thank you for your support throughout the 2016 Session and beyond!
- Cassie, Holly, Thara Fuller (21C director, Windham Central), and Sara Robertson-Ryan (school-age director, Greater Burlington YMCA) traveled to Washington D.C. for the Afterschool for All Challenge on May 24th. This is an annual advocacy event organized by the Afterschool Alliance designed to empower program and network staff to make Hill visits and meet with Congressional Delegations to discuss the importance of afterschool programs. We met with education staffers from Senator Leahy, Senator Sanders, and Representative Welch's offices and had great conversations about the value of afterschool in Vermont and got updates on key federal funding mechanisms including 21st CCLC, Child Care and Development Block Grant, Summer Meals Act, and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).
- Holly and Cassie led a workshop on our Zap the Gap campaign at the annual Vermont Early Childhood Day at the Legislature in March. We met new friends, mingled with familiar faces, and welcomed the opportunity to expand the reach for our advocacy campaign.
- In March, we launched an interactive map of all of the expanded learning opportunities in the state. The data points are connected with our internal database of program sites and the map is semi-automatically updated whenever information is added or changed in our database. Visitors to our website can search the map by a town, county, organization, and/or site to find programs. The points can also be filtered by sites which are 21C-funded, licensed, Boys & Girls Club, YMCAs, Teen Centers, and/or by their membership status with Vermont Afterschool. It shows basic location and contact information for each site. There

Zap the Gap Highlights

The Zap the Gap campaign celebrated a number of victories including:

- 1,200 Zap the Gap supporter cards collected statewide
- Vermont Child Poverty Council including funding for the ELO Special Fund as the first of only three priorities in their annual report from the full council
- Letter from the Working Vermonters Legislative Caucus to the House Appropriations Committee requesting an appropriation of \$2.5 million for the ELO Special Fund
- Numerous new legislative champions speaking out in committee and with colleagues about the importance of afterschool and summer learning
- A successful Afterschool & Summer Learning Day covered by multiple media outlets
- Letter from the House Education Committee to the House Appropriations Committee listing the ELO Special Fund as one of their top priorities and requesting \$1,000,000 in funding.
- Letter from the Senate Education Committee to the Senate Appropriations Committee also supporting an appropriation to the ELO Special Fund
- Increased engagement from our statewide advocates through calls, cards, testimony, visits to the State House, and more.
- 18 letters to the editor published + 1 op-ed in *Times Argus*.

are also links for site visitors to submit updates and corrections. Just prior to the launch, Erin solicited feedback from select program directors to increase the usability and improve the design. Improvements are forever in the works and feedback is always welcome. The post on our Facebook page to promote the map was our second-most clicked shared link for the quarter. The map is located here: vermontafterschool.org/resources/map.

Professional Development and High-Quality Programs

- The final ISS-AP Meeting in May concluded with participants from each strand sharing reflections on their learning for the year. The discussion underscored the value of “end products” created in this year-long professional development model. We’re collecting final evaluation feedback from participants now and will have the overall report completed by the end of June.
- The April 30th Regional Training Event was attended by 40 participants and included workshops on Grant Writing; STEM: Environmental Literacy; Physical Activity; and Understanding Complex Trauma and the Influence of Art in Afterschool. The Saturday training event received very high evaluations from all involved.
- Tracy was on the west coast for a three-day STEM Institute in Oregon with other Noyce STEM System Building networks. High points included business outreach, PEAR/DoS national data indicating areas of highest need to build staff skill in STEM instruction, STEM Statewide mapping and surveys in afterschool, advocacy, communications, and high ranking STEM programs. Tracy presented at the STEM Professional Development session with a focus on ISS-AP and our content partnerships in tinkering, engineering, and environmental literacy. Tracy followed up her Oregon conference with a trip to San Francisco to meet with education staff at the Exploratorium.
- As of the end of May, 860 participants have attended 57 trainings statewide through Vermont Afterschool. Thirteen more trainings are still scheduled through June 30th, primarily for summer staff training. Of the trainings held this year, 23 trainings were on STEM topics and 21 were YPQI: Youth Methods trainings. Two newer trainings were *STEM: Environmental Literacy in Action* and *Understanding Complex Trauma and the Influence of Art in Afterschool* each with five statewide trainings. Both topics had very high evaluations.
- In April, Tracy was asked to be a presenter for a national Afterschool Alliance webinar on the impact of the Science Frameworks that drive the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).

Highlights

- The **Spring Training Event** was held on April 30th and included four, full-day workshops that were well attended. This training model has been successful in providing low-cost, high-quality PD for direct service staff and will continue to be offered in FY17.

Next Steps and Partner Points

- Celebrate **National Summer Learning Day** on July 14, 2016! This is a great opportunity to spotlight the great work happening in summer learning programs in your community. See: <http://www.summerlearning.org>

Vermont Afterschool is recognized as an early adopter in helping afterschool providers understand their impact on STEM learning and the importance of connecting with the school day.

- Tracy has been working to recruit new individuals who identify as professional trainers to the Trainer Team. The intent is to elevate STEM quality by tapping the same individuals who are helping classroom teachers navigate NGSS, and to support other key trends such as trauma in youth, literacy development, physical activity, and social/emotional learning.
- We are finishing up our second year of supporting 21C programs in completing self-assessments and improvement plans under the Youth Program Quality Initiative (YPQI), which are now a requirement for all 21C grant recipients. While a few final submissions are still forthcoming, the data so far look promising: for all four of domains of the program quality assessments (safe environment, supportive environment, interaction, and engagement), the statewide averages improved between last year and this year. In addition, some of the areas under which programs scored the worst on their self-assessments last year were the areas that they included in their program improvement plans and then improved upon the most between last year and this year. This is good news and shows the model of continuous improvement intended by YPQI is working. Erin is putting finishing touches on the final report which we look forward to sharing soon.
- Karen earned a certificate from the Weikart Center as an External Assessor for the Youth Program Quality Assessment. This is in addition to her certificate as an External Assessor for the School-Age PQA earned in January.
- Five programs were awarded 2016-2017 Quality Improvement or Start-Up/Expansion Afterschool Grants through Child Development Division funds program. Karen is in contact with the awardees to secure the necessary paperwork prior to the grant year. In addition, final reports for the 2015-2016 CDD Grants are due in the middle of June.

Funding and Sustainability Efforts

- We are looking forward to starting the second year of our CDD Contract in July. We do a significant amount of work through this contract and appreciate the focus on school age care.
- We are also excited to share that we were recently awarded a new contract with VT Agency of Education to continue to provide support to the 21st CCLC Programs. This is an important part of our work and we're excited about the opportunities ahead.
- While we were invited to submit a full application to the McClure Foundation for a project on ELO's and personalized learning plans, we did not receive funding. We'll be looking at other options for moving this important work forward in the future.

Vermont Afterschool, Inc. Staff

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Vermont Afterschool, Inc. is a statewide nonprofit organization committed to building a strong foundation for Vermont's youth. Our work directly supports programs that provide innovative learning opportunities beyond the school day for all Vermont's children and youth. Vermont Afterschool's activities are directed toward building the capacity and commitment of communities to increase the quality and availability of programs during non-school hours.

For more information on Vermont Afterschool, Inc. visit:
www.vermontafterschool.org