



Vermont Afterschool

2013 POLICY AGENDA

The Vermont Center for Afterschool Excellence is pleased to present its policy agenda for 2013. The policy agenda is intended to provide direction on several incremental steps that Vermonters can take to support the education and care of Vermont's children and youth in afterschool, summer, and expanded learning programs so that they have the opportunities, skills, and resources they need to become healthy, productive members of society.

Specific policy recommendations for 2013 include:



1. SUPPORTING VERMONT'S SUMMER LEARNING EXPANSION PROJECT

Expand the number of summer learning programs across Vermont as a key strategy in supporting student success in order to address the academic achievement gap within the state, particularly for those in underserved, high poverty communities.

- The summer months provide an invaluable time for children and youth to explore, discover, and learn. Research tells us that including time for active, hands-on learning during the summer is an important component of addressing Vermont's poverty-based academic achievement gap.
- In order to see positive outcomes for students, we recommend that summer learning programs run for a minimum of five to six weeks for at least six hours a day. Vermont continues to lag behind the nation in terms of providing summer learning opportunities at this level to our children and youth. Programs in Vermont must grow to meet the need and be built in communities where programming does not currently exist.
- Creating new, and building existing, high-quality summer programs throughout Vermont will help us as a state to decrease the achievement gap and provide opportunities all of Vermont's children deserve.



2. UPDATING VERMONT'S AFTERSCHOOL REGULATIONS

Revise Vermont's School Age Care Regulations, which date from 1996. Much has happened in the last 15 years and we need updated regulations that take into account changes in program structures, relationships with schools, and quality improvements.

- A revised set of regulations has been in development over the past four years with input from a broad range of stakeholders.
 - We recommend that these revisions be put forward into the formal promulgation process in early 2013 so that revised and updated regulations can be in place by the start of the next school year. This is essential for the viability of our programs and the well-being of the children they serve.
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3. EXPANDING PROGRAM ACCESS AND AFFORDABILITY

Make afterschool care and education more affordable by improving Vermont's Child Care Financial Assistance Program in partnership with *Kids are a Priority One Coalition* and *Voices for Vermont's Children*.

- We recommend that the income eligibility guidelines and rates in the Child Care Financial Assistance Program are brought up to date.



4. IMPROVING CHILDHOOD NUTRITION

Address childhood nutrition by improving the Vermont Child Care and Adult Food Program in partnership with *Hunger Free Vermont*.

- Increase the reimbursement rate across tiers for providers who participate in the Child Care and Adult Food Program (CCFAP).
- Increase the score value within the STARS standards for providing meals as part of the CCFAP.
- Increase sponsor funding to child care providers that participate in the CCFAP.



5. REWARDING PROGRAM QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS

Improve the quality of afterschool care and education by rewarding improvements in quality in partnership with *Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children*.

- Specific appropriation for annual quality incentive bonuses in STARS to reward the improvement and maintenance of quality in afterschool care.
- Develop better mechanisms for funding and sustainability.



123 Ethan Allen Ave., Dupont Hall #309
Colchester, VT 05446
www.vermontafterschool.org
