



Policy Agenda 2015: Ensuring Access and Equity in Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELOs) Across Vermont

KEY FINDINGS

- 1. Peak Hours.** The hours of 3-6 p.m. are the peak hours for youth to commit crimes, be in or cause automobile accidents, be victims of crime, or engage in other risky behaviors. ELO participants are less likely to become involved in criminal activities, more likely to stay in school, and very likely to receive nutritious meals.
- 2. Return on Investment.** For every dollar spent on quality ELOs, including afterschool and summer learning programs, Vermont gets back \$2.18 in long-term savings and benefits from reduced criminal activity and substance abuse treatment, as well as increased high school completion and work productivity.
- 3. High Demand.** Twenty-four percent (24%) of Vermont's K-12 aged children are currently enrolled in ELOs. Of those not currently enrolled, 33% would participate if a program were available. Vermont parents identify program cost as one of the primary obstacles to enrollment in an ELO.
- 4. Achievement Gap.** Low-income students lose ground when they don't have access to the same types of learning opportunities outside of the school day and year as more affluent students. Income differences in math achievements have been shown to be eliminated for students who had consistent afterschool activities from K-5th grade.
- 5. Ability to Pay.** Vermont ranks 51st in the nation (including D.C.) for having the lowest level of low-income children in ELOs. Only 14% of VT children in an ELO after school qualify for the federal free and reduced price lunch program, compared to 45% nationally.

ACTION NEEDED

1) Access for All

State funding models must account for schools and communities adding more time for learning in a way that ensures equitable access to educational opportunities for all of Vermont's children and youth.

2) Support for 21st Century Community Learning Centers

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative is the only federal funding source dedicated exclusively to afterschool and ELO programs. Vermont's 21st CCLC competitive grant program, distributed via the Vermont Agency of Education, received \$5,643,198 for FY15 to provide afterschool and summer learning programs for more than 5,643 youth in high-poverty, low-performing schools. With bills in the U.S. House and Senate eliminating dedicated 21st CCLC funding, it's crucial that we have a diverse and broad set of voices telling Congress that afterschool programs are essential to student success.

3) Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP) Market Rate and Eligibility Increases

Increased funding for CCFAP will provide working families with more of the financial support they need to obtain quality child care and rich early learning opportunities for their children. Vermont Afterschool supports the proposal by the Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children (VAEYC), Voices for Vermont's Children and Vermont Early Educators United to raise the base tuition payment made on behalf of families to at least the 50th percentile of the current market rate, and annually adjust the guidelines used to determine payments and eligibility for CCFAP to keep them current.

4) Early Childhood Workforce Training

High-quality child care and afterschool programs with consistent, educated providers are essential to working Vermont families who are seeking stable incomes and the ability to provide their children with the supports they need to succeed in each phase of their life. Vermont Afterschool supports VAEYC's efforts to secure additional, dedicated, and ongoing funding to support training and professional development for the early childhood and afterschool work force.