

Opinion

Inside and outside the classroom, after-school programs work: Another View

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BY **PENNLIVE OP-ED**

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The President's 2018 fiscal budget eliminates federal funding for after-school programs, saying there is no evidence of their impact.

That is not the case here in Pennsylvania, where after-school programs are a proven, high yield investment in our kids, our communities and our economy.

Every one dollar invested in after-school programs saves at least THREE DOLLARS by increasing kids' earning potential, improving kids' performance at school and reducing crime and juvenile delinquency.

At the end of a typical school day, learning and growth do not stop for the 40,000 Pennsylvania youths enrolled in approximately 460 high quality, school based and community powered after-school programs that are funded in part by the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) program - the one the president wants to end.

Pennsylvania's 21st CCLC programs provide mentors to students that have no place to go after the school day. They offer healthy snacks. Students develop a sense of self that is not taught during the normal school day.

They are able to learn essential skills such as doing their taxes, writing a check and balancing a checkbook.



Gov. Wolf's 2017 budget plan: Winners and losers

Gov. Tom Wolf's third budget plan focuses on cutting costs so as to be able to provide increased funding to the Commonwealth's public schools and put more resources into fighting heroin and opioid addictions.

In 21st CCLC programs, students have the opportunity to learn and explore some of the most innovative technology available today through STEM activities. They are able to design, construct, implement and troubleshoot. Failure is a part of the learning process and part of life. Teamwork is cultivated.

Other Pennsylvania 21st CCLC programs have conquered the "summer slide," which is the tendency for students, especially those from low-income families, to lose some of the achievement gains they made during the previous school year.

This was accomplished through strengthening literacy techniques and using speech opportunities for healthy debates. Student reading levels through the "Read by 4th" metric were measured at the beginning and end of the summer program and increased by an average of two letter levels.

These successes underscore the vital role that after-school programs play for thousands of Pennsylvania families - and their role in growing citizens who will power our future.



Pa.'s investment in preschool lags behind other states, study shows

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children along with the Pre-K for PA campaign point to the study to make an argument for lawmakers to support Gov. Tom Wolf's proposed \$75 million increase for Pre-K Counts and Head Start, and not the \$25 million one included in the House-passed Republican budget.

It is just plain common sense: After-school works.

But for those that need more convincing, we have data.

Recent studies found that, across the nation, afterschool programs help students succeed in school today and prepare them for the jobs of tomorrow.

Students in after-school programs attend school more often, get better grades and improve their work habits and behaviors. Our working parents want and need these programs.

In Pennsylvania, STEM jobs are key to strengthening and diversifying our economy. They are among the fastest growing and highest paying jobs; yet across the state, employers are struggling to find skilled STEM workers.

A recent national study showed that afterschool STEM programs help close that gap by inspiring young people and equipping them with the skills they need to pursue STEM careers.

Among the Pennsylvania students participating in this study:

- More than 75 percent said their perseverance and critical thinking skills had improved.
- Nearly 78 percent were more interested in science careers.>> Nearly 73 percent said they identify more as a "science person."
- More than 78 percent said they learned more about careers in science.
- More than 78 percent said they were more interested in science.

No wonder 93 percent of Pennsylvania parents surveyed for the "America After 3pm" data report said they are happy with their children's afterschool programs.

More than 9 in 10 parents across our state support public funding for after-school programs. Nearly 812,000 Pennsylvania students are already being left without after-school access.

The worst thing we can do is take these programs away from the kids and families who depend on them.

Supporting afterschool is a healthy, smart investment in our kids, our families and our communities.

Let's protect that investment in Pennsylvania.

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