

# Leading a New Day for Learning

*A Joint Statement From*

*The National Association of Elementary School Principals  
and The National AfterSchool Association*

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National AfterSchool Association (NAA) join together in support of creating a new learning day for children. Such a day would consider the needs of the whole child, encompass the ways, times and situations in which children learn, and provide the breadth of enriching experiences that help them become engaged learners. We challenge our members to think of leading a new learning day as a means to achieving innovative reform for both school and afterschool—not just another responsibility to add to the workload, but a clear path to achieving our mutual goals for children.

 National Association of  
Elementary School  
**Principals**

NATIONAL  
**AfterSchool**  
ASSOCIATION

## A New Day for Learning

In January 2007, the Time, Learning, and Afterschool Task Force – funded by the C. S. Mott Foundation and chaired by former NAESP executive director, Vincent L. Ferrandino – released a report entitled, *A New Day for Learning*, that calls for “...a comprehensive, seamless approach to learning that values the distinct experiences that families, school, afterschool programs, and communities provide for children.” Whether in an urban, suburban, or rural area, a new day for learning:

- **Expands the definition of student success.**  
Reading, math, and science are critical to a solid educational foundation but must be bolstered by applied skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving and teamwork. Beyond merely teaching students these skills, we must thoughtfully assess them to ensure that today’s young people are fully prepared to succeed in school, work and life.
- **Uses research-based knowledge about how students learn best.**  
Students can’t learn if they are not engaged. Educators and community stakeholders must utilize research-based knowledge about how students learn best to effectively frame their programs and instruction.

- **Fosters collaboration across all sectors.**

To focus all resources on supporting academic and developmental goals for students, new collaborative structures must be built across sectors in communities and up and down government hierarchies. The vital involvement of community, business, civic and municipal leaders, parents and social service providers is critical to student success and pays economic, civic and social dividends to all stakeholders.

- **Integrates various learning approaches and places.**

Engaging strategies that incorporate the arts, technology, service learning and apprenticeships can amplify core academic learning and provide students with opportunities for enriching their education and connecting it with the adult world that they will enter. Schools are just one of the many places in the community where learning and student success can happen.

- **Provides new opportunities for leadership and professional development.**

While most current leadership development and certification programs are school-based, the importance of community building skills is growing. Teachers and youth development staff can forge partnerships that result in heightened professionalism for both-and in better outcomes for students <sup>1</sup>.

*A New Day for Learning* has received strong support from national education associations representing chief state school officers, superintendents, and

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<sup>1</sup> Funded by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the New Day for Learning Advisory Board is working to bring awareness and inspire action at the local, state and national level to re-envision how, when and where students learn. For more information, visit [www.newdayforlearning.org](http://www.newdayforlearning.org)

school boards, all of whom have issued statements on how their members can contribute to the vision of a new system of learning. National afterschool organizations such as the Afterschool Alliance and the Coalition for Science After School, have praised the report for its concept of providing expanded learning opportunities for children and youth.

While NAESP and NAA recognize that everyone – from the highest-level policy makers to front-line teachers and afterschool staff – has a critical role to play in creating this new learning day, we believe that principals and afterschool directors, who are most directly involved and responsible for children’s day-to-day learning experiences, are key to moving the vision from concept to reality.

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## Roles of School and Afterschool in A New Day for Learning

Underlying an **expanded definition of student success** is the concept of supporting the whole child. Educators know that children’s social-emotional health and physical development are essential to preparing them to be confident, creative, and engaged in lifelong learning. Art, music, and physical education have significant roles to play in helping children explore their creativity and recognize their own unique abilities. Opportunities to experience success in these areas can be particularly important for children who may struggle to achieve academically. Yet in the current climate of demands for accountability tied to test scores, many schools have been forced to forego these subjects and concentrate on the basics of math, science, and reading. Afterschool programs, however, can fill this need by incorporating art, music, and physical recreation into their daily programming.

Aligning school day learning with afterschool programming exemplifies

the concept of **using our knowledge of how children learn best by integrating proven strategies to acquiring and reinforcing knowledge**. Integration, however, must not simply add more time for academics, but rather ensure that diverse experiences are aligned within the child’s day: from teacher-led instruction to hands-on, experiential learning; from working alone at a desk to organizing a kickball game. Thus lessons in the science classroom are enhanced by a community project to clean up a riverbank; addition and subtraction are brought to life when making change in an afterschool game of Monopoly.

We believe that **collaboration across all sectors** must begin at the school level. By working in partnership, school and afterschool leaders can be strong advocates for greater collaboration locally, statewide, and nationally.

Preparing today’s students to compete and succeed in an increasingly global society has turned our attention to strengthening not only math and science skills, but also skills that help them apply their knowledge and participate in an interconnected world economy: cultural literacy, problem solving, teamwork, communications, innovation, and social responsibility. In collaboration with schools, afterschool programs can help foster these skills by integrating various learning approaches and places and providing opportunities for children to work cooperatively on group activities, participate in community service projects, and exercise some autonomy in the selection and design of afterschool programming.

Effective leaders are continuous learners. They are always open to new insights and ready to experiment with the potential of new strategies to achieve their goals. Collaboration between principals and afterschool directors can provide a rich environment for sharing leadership and management concerns and development of new solutions that benefit staff and students. In the same spirit, collaboration

that creates shared **professional development** can enhance the effectiveness of both school and afterschool and open doors to **new leadership** opportunities for staff.

## Steps to Creating An Integrated Learning Day

While schools across the nation share the same basic characteristics and structure, afterschool programs come in many forms – from just one school-based program, to a myriad of community-based programs that may serve students from the same school. Some communities can provide funding for afterschool, while others may offer only in-kind assistance. Not all afterschool programs have the breadth of offerings or the level of quality needed to have the impact they would hope to have. Thus any partnership between school and afterschool must realistically reflect local needs and conditions.

We also know that time and resources are precious commodities for both school and afterschool leaders. Following are suggestions for collaboration designed to make effective use of activities and programs already in place at school and in afterschool programs.

### *Start the Conversation*

Commitment to collaboration on the part of school and afterschool – whether programs are school- or community-based – is the key to success. An important first step is a meeting between the principal and afterschool director(s) to share information about their respective programs, affirm their mutual goals, and explore how they might work together to provide a variety of learning experiences for children. It may be useful for each leader to prepare in advance a “wish list” for areas where they feel collaboration will enhance their efforts. The NAESP publication, *Leading Afterschool Learning Communities*, provides checklists and other planning tools that can help focus the discussion.

### *Create a Shared Vision*

Collaboration between school and afterschool should begin with the development of a shared vision—one that acknowledges and respects the unique contributions each can bring to the goal of providing the varied experiences all children need to become engaged learners. Including school and afterschool staff members, as well as students, parents, and community stakeholders in the process will ensure that the vision reflects their needs.

### *Foster Communication and Planning*

Principals and afterschool directors can take advantage of numerous opportunities that already exist to promote ongoing communications and integration of school and afterschool learning.

- The afterschool director might serve on the school's leadership team
- Afterschool staff and classroom teachers can participate in joint planning sessions to design mutually supportive activities.
- Teachers should be encouraged to participate in special afterschool offerings, such as leading a book club or sharing of a special talent or interest with children that will provide opportunities to relate to students on a level beyond the classroom.
- A mechanism should be in place for school and afterschool staffs to share key information, such as daily homework assignments.
- Teachers and afterschool staff each have useful perspectives as a result of their interactions with students. Teachers can help afterschool staff learn about student needs in the areas of time management and study skills. Teachers can draw on afterschool insights about children as they help with homework or watch them interact with their peers.

### *Assess, Share, and Pursue Resources*

While financial resources for schools are stretched thin, resources for afterschool programs are often even more difficult to obtain. Principals can help by providing in-kind support such as access to facilities, equipment, and professional development. Afterschool directors can put guidelines in place to ensure that when facilities and equipment are shared, normal school operations and maintenance are not disrupted.

Principals and leaders of both school-based and community-based programs should consider the value of partnership in pursuing additional resources from community organizations and foundations. Communicating a clear vision of the importance of learning opportunities beyond the school day and a plan for using funds to align school and afterschool learning is an effective way to assure potential funders that their support will achieve maximum results for children.

### *Increase Community Awareness and Support*

Community-wide responsibility and collaboration are critical components to realizing the vision of a new learning day. By sharing access to established relationships and reaching out together to broaden these connections, principals and afterschool program directors can significantly increase awareness and foster conversations about their responsibility for children's learning among community members, businesses, faith-based institutions, and government leaders.

Encouraging parental support and shared responsibility for children's learning is an ongoing – and crucial – issue for schools. Afterschool staff interacts with most parents on a daily basis, a connection that can be a powerful way to draw parents into the school and encourage their participation in the academic lives of their children. Principals can help strengthen outreach to parents by using

school communication tools to inform them of the value of afterschool learning and opportunities for participation. Partnerships can further support parents through programs that offer adult education or provide referrals to an array of financial, employment, and healthcare services.

### **Promote Professional Development**

A well-trained staff is a key component of quality in school and afterschool. Principals and afterschool directors can create collaborative professional development opportunities for teachers and afterschool staff to foster a cross-fertilization of varied approaches to learning and integration of experiential methods throughout the day. Often afterschool programs lack resources to access training, so an important step principals can take is to include afterschool staff, where appropriate, in professional development opportunities they plan for their teachers.

### **Use Evaluation for Program Improvement**

Continuous monitoring and improvement should be a central feature of school and afterschool collaboration. Principals are skilled at designing evaluations and analyzing data on a variety of student outcomes. They can share these skills by working with afterschool directors to identify the evaluation procedures and measures that will provide the data they need for program improvement. An analysis of school data in the areas of attendance, discipline, and student engagement can also provide insight into the effectiveness of afterschool programs in promoting these essential components of student achievement.

### **Our Shared Commitment**

As educators, we know we must change the equation for children by increasing opportunities for enriching learning experiences. At the same time, shrinking budgets require us to use resources more efficiently and to take a new look at what already exists with an eye toward innovation. We believe school and afterschool leaders can meet these challenges by working together to create a new learning day that is not bound by place, time or conventional ways of acquiring knowledge and skills. NAESP and NAA are committed to offering support and assistance to our members as they take these steps together.

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## **RESOURCES**

Afterschool Alliance. *Expanded Learning Opportunities: It Takes More than Time*. 2007. ([www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org))

American Association of School Administrators. *Superintendents' Perspectives on the "New Day for Learning Report"*. 2008. ([www.aasa.org](http://www.aasa.org))

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. *Making the Case for Educating the Whole Child*. 2009. ([www.wholechildeducation.org](http://www.wholechildeducation.org))

Citizen Schools. *Expanding Learning Time: How the Edwards Middle School partnered with Citizen Schools to transform the learning day*. 2008. ([www.citizenschools.org](http://www.citizenschools.org))

Community Schools. *Community-Based Learning: Engaging Students for Success and Citizenship*. 2006. ([www.communityschools.org](http://www.communityschools.org))

Council of Chief State School Officers. *Extended Learning Opportunities*. Policy Statement Adopted January 2006. ([www.ccsso.org](http://www.ccsso.org))

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Harvard Family Research Project. *Supporting Student Outcomes Through Expanded Learning Opportunities*. 2009. ([www.hfrp.org](http://www.hfrp.org))

National AfterSchool Association. *NAA Standards for Quality School-Age Care*. ([www.naaweb.org](http://www.naaweb.org))

National Association of Elementary School Principals. *Leading After-School Learning Communities: What Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do*. 2006. ([www.naesp.org](http://www.naesp.org))

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National School Boards Association. *Building and Sustaining After-School Programs: Successful Practices in School Board Leadership*. 2005. ([www.nsba.org](http://www.nsba.org))

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