Partnering with Schools to Reopen and Meet Students' Needs

This is Afterschool in Utah

Afterschool Programs: We’re Here to Support Your Students

Local afterschool programs are an essential part of your school’s response to the coronavirus pandemic and will continue to play a critical role through recovery. As we look ahead to the next school year, afterschool leaders and educators stand ready to help children catch up and keep up, which includes ensuring all kids have access to learning opportunities and the supports they need to emerge from this crisis strong, resilient and hopeful.

No matter what your school’s reopening strategy is, afterschool programs are eager to serve and innovatively adapt their programming to keep students safe and ensure their needs are met. Here are four ways afterschool programs can support student success:

**More time for engaged learning.** Afterschool programs can engage students with additional learning time to make up for learning loss and support distance learning. Local data from 2018 demonstrated a positive correlation between program attendance and increased reading comprehension scores. Afterschool is also a safe space for kids to be exposed to new experiences and spark new interests in fun and engaging ways.

**Help students feel and heal.** Youth have the opportunities in afterschool programs to develop positive relationships with caring adults and mentors and receive social-emotional learning support. With more support to feel and heal, negative behaviors decrease across the board; 55% of K-12 students who attended a 21st Century Community Learning Center afterschool program for 30 days or more improved their behavior during the school day (2017).

**Sustain connections to families.** Not only do afterschool programs allow families to return to work, they also support schools’ efforts to engage families by connecting them to food, health, economic, and other types of resources. Survey results from a consortium of Utah afterschool programs reflected that 76% of families reported their child’s program helped provide a bridge between families and the school.

**Address inequities that are likely worsening.** Afterschool programs reach and serve a significant number of young people from families who have low income and diverse backgrounds. Programs also can serve the students who might not have the same level of family support at home to help them with distance learning.

Utah Afterschool Network is a catalyst for building strong, safe, and healthy afterschool programs to support youth, families, and communities.

Contact
Utah Afterschool Network
254 S 600 E #200
Salt Lake City, UT 84102
(801) 359-2722
info@utahafterschool.org
www.utahafterschool.org
@ut_afterschool
What Afterschool Can Offer for Various Reopening Strategies

No matter which strategy your school uses to reopen, afterschool can help! By inviting your afterschool partners to your planning discussions and collaborating to align resources and facilities, afterschool providers can help be creative in collectively meeting the needs of your school. Additional information on school day and afterschool alignment can be found on the Utah Afterschool Network website.

### Staggered Times

Some districts may have A and B groups that attend on alternating days or in AM and PM rotations. In either case, expanded learning staff could be:

- Working with the group that is not currently in class.
- Doing innovative and engaging activities that build on the lessons taught in class.
- Supporting students in completing projects assigned in class.
- Doing computer science activities, theater, visual arts or science to enrich students’ learning experiences.

### Different Grade Levels

Similarly, if districts choose to have in-school programming for younger students and continue distance learning for older students, afterschool providers could schedule in-person activities for the older students so that they have opportunities to be with peers, practice social and emotional skills, get support with their school work and have enriching activities to keep them engaged and active.

### Episodic Distance Learning

Should the pandemic re-emerge and require periodic distance learning, afterschool providers can partner in ensuring that all students have remote access to learning and school meals. They can also maintain connections with adults from their school communities to ensure they are safe and their families are connected to resources.

### All In-Person Instruction

Afterschool providers will still be essential partners in helping students readjust to the school environment and re-engage with learning.

To make your school’s reopening as successful as possible, we hope you will consider the following:

- Invite afterschool programs to your planning discussions, involving them early so they can identify the best ways to share resources and facilities and meet the needs of all students.
- Establish a thoughtful distribution of resources between schools and afterschool programs to help alleviate budget constraints and ensure students’ academic, social and emotional needs are met.
- Collaborate with parents, teachers, students and community organizations to support needs-assessment gathering.

Students are ready to be fully engaged in academic, social and physical spaces again and parents (including teachers) need to return to work to keep our economy strong. It’s more important than ever for school time and out-of-school time to work together as true partners. Together we can build a more coordinated, streamlined, cost-effective model of service across the full school and work day. The best part is, our students will benefit the most.