

## Questions & Answers

**Q: Why is it critical to invest in afterschool learning communities now?**

A: Children and youth need afterschool learning and enrichment opportunities to reach their full potential in today's society. All Massachusetts young people need schools and community organizations to come together and provide safe, creative and developmentally appropriate opportunities for learning between the hours of 2:00-6:00. The achievement gap widens during out-of-school time hours, particularly in the summer. All children and youth need to use these hours to supplement their school learning, to have experiences in the arts and with fitness, to increase their teamwork skills, and to improve problem solving and communication skills. Afterschool learning communities provide such opportunities through maximizing community and school resources and expertise.

**Q: What public funding has been cut for afterschool programs?**

A: Since 2001, the state has cut over \$9 million in programs that served children and youth. *After-School and Out-of-School Time (ASOST) Grant.* In FY 2002, the After-School and Out-of-School Time (ASOST) grant program was eliminated from the state budget. The ASOST grant program was administered by the Massachusetts Department of Education and distributed approximately \$5 million to afterschool programs in 293 sites while supporting over 15,000 children and youth. *After-School Youth Development Matching Grants.* The After-School Youth Development Matching grants were eliminated from the FY 2002 state budget. These matching grants were administered by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and distributed approximately \$4 million to municipalities and community based organizations to provide programming for at-risk youth. With the help of

federal, municipal, and private matching funds, this program reached over 10,000 of the most at risk-youth.

**Q: Why is it critical to increase the Afterschool and Out-of-School Time Quality Grant at the Department of Education?**

A: The Afterschool and Out-of-School Time Quality Grant (Line Item 7061-9611) was funded at \$1 million last year, and was distributed to fund 39 grants to public and private schools, community based organizations and other community partners who collaborated to provide new learning and enrichment programs afterschool. Remarkably, the Department of Education received over \$13 million in requests for this funding in less than three weeks, demonstrating the tremendous need for afterschool learning opportunities across the state. After receiving this large response, the Board of Education voted to include \$7.5 million for the ASOST grant in its budget request. As a result, we are seeking \$10 million to fund continuation and new grants for afterschool programs this in the FY 2008 budget.

**Q: Why do we need to increase access for working families to school age subsidies?**

A: There are currently approximately 5,700 school-age children between the ages of 5 and 12 who are on the state's waitlist for an afterschool programming that is available. We are asking for \$8.2 million which would provide the resources needed to support programming for about half, or about 2,850, children and youth.

**Q: What is the proposed new program at the Department of Public Health, and why is it needed in addition to the DOE grant?**

A: Right now there is no comprehensive state funding that supports older youth. At a time in

young people's lives when they are especially in need of career development programming, mentors, and health education, we are not able to fund this comprehensive programming. The proposed new program at DPH would create additional out-of-school time opportunities for middle school and high school age youth, including programs that promote health and safety, and scholarships for career development opportunities. With a Division of Child and Adolescent Health, DPH is well-positioned to coordinate these needed supports to keep young people safe and healthy.

**Q: Can you explain why we need to extend school age subsidies for 13 year olds?**

A: Right now, many 12 year olds who are participating in subsidized afterschool programs and turn 13 during the school year lose their funding and are no longer able to attend their programs. This causes unnecessary disruption for youth and their families at a time when many young people this age are prone to seek out risky behaviors. This funding would enable children who "age out" of their subsidy mid-year to remain in their afterschool program until the end of the school year.

**Q: How is the Afterschool Learning Communities budget request different from the Expanded Learning Time pilot grant?**

A: Children and youth need a variety of learning and development opportunities between the hours of 2:00-6:00. The Afterschool Learning Communities budget request is focused on creating the full range of opportunities for children 5 through 18 through maximizing school and community investment, building on the strengths of programs that work in communities, and parent choice. The new Afterschool and Out-of-School Time Quality grant exemplifies this approach— it allows for programming to be based at the school or in the community depending on the needs of families and it requires community funding to match the state investment. The Expanded Learning Time pilot

grant, a separate line item, currently funds 10 school to extend the school day.

**Q: What's happening with the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers grant program?**

A: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers is a federal grant program administered by state education agencies. The federal government determines the amount each state and territory receives under this grant. Massachusetts will receive another cut in this funding stream, going from \$16 million last year to an estimated \$14 million for this year. This cut results from the application of the Title I formula, set and used by the federal government, based on child poverty estimates. The recently reported numbers showed a shift in the population of low income children in Massachusetts; therefore, resulting in the 13% cut. This is the second time this funding stream has been cut in the last four years. In 2005, Massachusetts received a 23% cut to the same grant program, going from \$21 million to \$16 million. Funding the Afterschool Learning Communities budget priorities will help address the loss in services caused by the cuts to this grant program.

**Q: What is the After School & Out of School Time Commission and how does it impact this year's budget request?**

A: The After School and Out of School Time Commission was established in the FY 2006 state budget and is an opportunity to lay the foundation for a comprehensive afterschool system for children and youth in the Commonwealth. With public officials and community stakeholders appointed to serve on the Commission, it is an important step in looking at how our state's afterschool and out of school time programs currently function. The Commission will make recommendations on how to better coordinate, enhance and finance programs in the future. The Co-Chairs of the Commission are Senator Thomas McGee and Representative Marie St. Fleur, and the Commission is set to convene this year.