

Welcome

We are pleased to share with you this first collaboratively produced issue of *Afterschool Matters* from the National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) and the Robert Bowne Foundation. The transition of the Afterschool Matters Initiative to NIOST has been extremely exciting. It includes both an empowering and meaningful journal for the out-of-school-time field and a national expansion of the Afterschool Matters Practitioner Fellowship. We were thrilled to work with the National Writing Project to launch fellowships at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and at the University of California in Berkeley in fall 2008. Take a closer look at the transforming experience of the practitioner fellowship by reading “Putting Our Questions at the Center” in this issue.

A sense of urgency pervades our field today. Current economic trends and tumbling school budgets create pressure on program leaders to stretch resources and provide enriching activities to support learning, all while addressing the urgent needs of underserved children and youth. The topics addressed in this issue of *Afterschool Matters*—supporting middle school youth, preparing youth for 21st century skills, connecting Latina girls and technology, and promoting environmental ethics—illustrate the multifaceted roles out-of-school-time programs fulfill in promoting healthy and positive development.

In “Making the Most of the Middle,” Holly Morehouse describes how the Vermont Department of Education and Vermont program leaders created a research-based framework for structuring and shaping afterschool programs for middle school. In “Preparing Youth for the 21st Century Knowledge Economy,” Cochran and Ferrari argue for incorporating more work-based learning experiences in youth development programs, thereby improving the quality of youth work experiences, skill preparation, and business/community partnerships. In our third article, the creators of “The Girl Game Company” describe early findings from an investigation of an afterschool program that seeks to increase participation of rural middle school Latina girls in information technology coursework and careers by engaging them in computer game design.

Having just returned from the Miami Metro Zoo with my own young children, it’s exciting to read the results Douglas and Katz captured in “It’s All Happening at the Zoo.” This article reminds us of the importance of bringing afterschool program children and youth into the community, tapping its resources and the power of real-life learning to build environmental stewardship.

We hope you will enjoy this issue as much as we have enjoyed preparing it for you!



GEORGIA HALL, PH.D.
Senior Research Scientist, NIOST
Managing Editor, *Afterschool Matters*

Afterschool Matters

Georgia Hall
Managing Editor

Sara Hill
Senior Research Consultant

Jan Gallagher
Editor

Daniella van Gennep
Designer

Afterschool Matters is a national, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to promoting professionalism, scholarship, and consciousness in the field of afterschool education. Published annually by the Robert Bowne Foundation and the National Institute on Out-of-School Time, the journal serves those involved in developing and running programs for youth during the out-of-school hours, in addition to those engaged in research and shaping policy.

For information on *Afterschool Matters* and the Afterschool Matters Initiative, contact
Karen Lachance
Assistant Director
National Institute on
Out-of-School Time
Wellesley Centers for Women
Wellesley College
106 Central Street
Wellesley, MA 02481
klachanc@wellesley.edu