

## Welcome

As the long winter finally wanes, we New Englanders are forcibly reminded that we live in a four-season climate and that each season places its unique stamp on our lives and daily routines. While many facets of weather can be forecast, unpredictable changes can always challenge our preparedness and cause us to rethink or restock our toolbox.

Work in the out-of-school time field ebbs and flows in cycles much like the seasons. For example, in the last two years we at NIOST have been deeply involved in the issue of physical activity and healthy eating, in synergy with the First Lady's Let's Move initiative to stem childhood obesity. Ten years ago OST's role in childhood obesity seemed peripheral. Now it is clear that OST programs can and must play a vital role in promoting child wellness.

This issue of *Afterschool Matters* focuses on two of the many issues that are putting their stamp on the OST climate today: systemic development and quality building. As the field strives to systematize the governance, delivery, and use of OST programming, much effort is also directed toward assessing the quality of program practices and the impact of program participation. Even as we secure many accomplishments in these domains, we are continually challenged by the unexpected—shifts in funding sources, changing regulations, and the emerging needs of today's youth. The articles in this journal augment our professional toolboxes with many carefully developed strategies for growing the field and for improving daily program practices.

As one season moves into another, we move to embrace what we know that season will bring. Developing systems and building quality define a large part of our work during this “season” in the development of our field. As we work to resolve the complex challenges brought forth in these pages, we continue to make the OST program space a stronger and more effective setting for advancing the lives of children and youth.



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