

WELCOME

The National Institute on Out-of-School Time (NIOST) was thrilled to welcome our second cohort of National Afterschool Matters Fellows earlier this fall to the campus of Wellesley College. For the next two years, these 25 amazing afterschool professionals will work with us and our partners at the National Writing Project to engage in practitioner-centered inquiry, research, and writing.

The fellows, who hail from 18 different states, represent a variety of out-of-school time (OST) experience: citywide initiatives, community nonprofits, public school districts, museums, zoos, and longstanding youth-serving organizations. I am excited to see how this second class of fellows will build knowledge and enrich the field.

Meeting these diverse fellows reminded me again of how much OST practitioners have in common. No matter where we are located or what kind of programming we provide, we are challenged to find enough time and money to train staff. We yearn to understand how best to support children with all their varied needs and backgrounds. We look for measurement and evaluation systems that will help us be accountable without being burdensome. Most of all, we strive to be present for our kids, with all the energy and enthusiasm they need us to bring.

This issue of *Afterschool Matters* underscores our common goals while demonstrating the diverse paths we follow: from Making and video games to arts education supported by university students and more. The lead article takes unity in diversity as its theme, challenging us to adopt fully inclusive language, practices, and attitudes. Our Voices from the Field essay—by a fellow from the previous iteration of the Afterschool Matters fellowship—emphasizes what all OST practitioners know in our hearts: that we learn as much as we teach and receive even more than we give.

Like Voices writer Michelle Masarik, participants in the fellowship retreat charted the journeys that brought them into the OST field. Several fellows talked about how their own experiences in afterschool programs or camps shaped their lives. Whether we came to the field as former participants or by some other route, we share a passion for the work of providing quality afterschool for all. As one fellow put it in her application profile, “All our children deserve to be surrounded by people who possess unshakable belief in their capacity to claim the sky.”



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