



GEORGIA STATEWIDE AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK

75 Marietta Street, NW • Suite 401 • Atlanta, Georgia 30303
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July 8, 2020

Dear School and Community Leaders,

We know school districts across the state are grappling with the massive and uncharted task of bringing our students back into school buildings safely, and we appreciate your efforts, as well as those of communities, schools, and leaders across Georgia. As we move ahead, we need to ensure that we recover fully and quickly—and that includes making sure our youth have the support they need to catch up and re-engage in school and community life.

The Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network (GSAN) is a public-private collaborative dedicated to advancing, connecting and supporting quality afterschool programs to promote the success of children and youth throughout Georgia. Afterschool and summer learning programs have long provided supplemental education and support to help close academic and opportunity gaps among students most in need – the same children and families you serve in your schools. These programs can offer immediate resources – including facilities, staff and connections – to help address logistical and budget challenges schools are facing.

Many of Georgia's afterschool programs pivoted to remain open, continue to serve students and families today, and stand ready to help with efforts to rebuild and return stronger than before COVID-19. Many programs are finding new ways to serve youth and communities, whether through providing care for children of essential workers and those returning back to offices, virtual programming, take home activities, meals and snacks, and regular check-ins with youth. We ask that you partner with local afterschool programs in your community and involve them in your plans to reopen. In addition to experience with continuing to serve youth and families during the pandemic, they can offer support in the following ways:

- **Time** – Afterschool and summer programs provide critical academic support and youth development services for K-12 students and their families outside of traditional school hours. For schools considering a staggered schedule, these wraparound services are more important than ever.
- **Space** – Afterschool programs operate in a variety of settings, often moving between classrooms and community spaces and can help schools expand learning and engagement to include community centers, parks, libraries, college campuses, faith-based locations and more.
- **Staff** – Afterschool can provide additional staffing capacity, including professionals who are trained in positive youth development, online learning and trauma informed care. Having more hands on deck is especially critical to help students recover from learning loss and the social isolation forced by the pandemic.
- **Engaging parents and families** – Many families are in crisis, need additional supports and are struggling to stay connected. This creates a serious challenge for communicating about new



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protocols and schedules that are developed for instruction, transportation and safety procedures. Schools will need to be more connected than ever with families and afterschool can help using their deep relationships with families and community partners, and a long history of coordinating services to meet families' economic, health, food and other needs.

- **Innovation** – Afterschool programs are able to step in with flexibility and pivot quickly as school schedules and educational delivery systems shift. We offer safe, developmentally rich settings for learning and opportunities that engage students in meaningful projects and activities correlated to academic achievement.

What we ask of you:

- Invite afterschool programs and child care centers to your planning discussions, involving them early so they can identify the best ways to share resources and facilities.
- Collaborate with parents, teachers, students and community organizations to support needs-assessment gathering.
- 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. For example, consider partnering with community-based programs to include their orders of cleaning supplies and PPE in district orders to further leverage purchasing power.

Many 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.

Learn more about how afterschool supports Georgia's students' learning needs [here](#) and how afterschool is essential for COVID-19 recovery [here](#). Please let us know if you have questions or if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Katie Landes,
Director, Georgia Statewide Afterschool Network