

After-school Programs and More: Promoting Comprehensive Neighborhood Centers

“Schools should be open 11 to 13 hours a day, six to seven days a week and 11 to 12 months of the year – providing arts, athletics and clubs for students, and classes for parents.”

— Arne Duncan
U.S. Secretary of Education



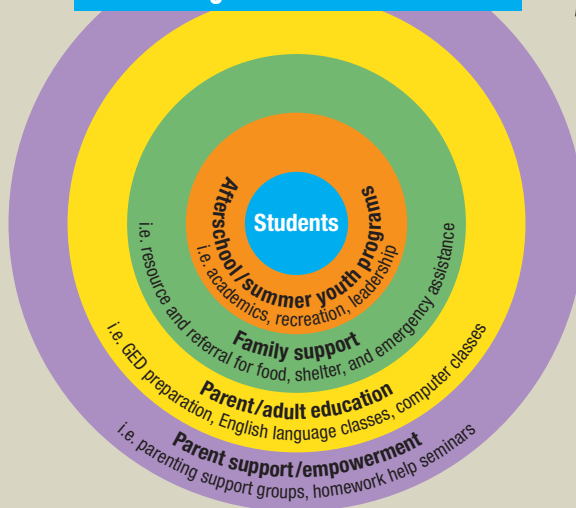
Denver’s four comprehensive school-based neighborhood centers serve some 2,000 youth and adults each year, providing enriching afterschool programs for students, educational classes for adults, and supportive services and referrals for families in need. Placed in some of Denver’s highest needs neighborhoods serving middle school students, the centers’ provision of services is critically important to the educational outcomes of youth, and to families’ and community members’ engagement and well-being. In today’s current economic crisis, families and communities need the services more than ever before.

Mobilizing resources to support families and communities

Supporting students’ academic achievement in economically depressed areas requires strong communities, a consortium of city

agencies, local foundations, and nonprofit organizations. In Denver, these entities came together in the late 1990s to create three comprehensive school-based neighborhood centers — and added a fourth in 2005. The centers’ approach to student outcomes uses the unique resources of each community to support learning.

Scope of Services at Neighborhood Centers



Hubs for vital resources

Each comprehensive school-based neighborhood center is developed and operated by a community organization working with neighborhood residents to create programs that meet local needs and reflect local strengths. With the centers serving as a hub, the managing organization, as well as a deep network of partners, offers seamless and comprehensive service delivery that keeps children and youth safe, strengthens their connection with school, inspires learning, and supports families.

“At the Center, we help stabilize families so they can focus more on supporting their child’s education. In one instance, we helped a family transition from living in a shelter to renting an apartment, and registered them with a local food bank. We helped them create a plan to reduce risk factors at home. Meanwhile, their children attended the afterschool program and received homework help, along with help building life skills and resiliency skills.”

— Ginger Alferos
Manager of Youth & Family Development
Mi Casa’s Neighborhood Center
at Lake Middle School

A model to meet multiple needs

Denver’s comprehensive school-based neighborhood centers represent the historical convergence of the Beacons Centers, Full-Service Community Schools, and most recently, A New Day for Learning.

The four centers are strategically located in schools whose students and surrounding communities have some of Denver’s highest needs.

“I was involved in bringing the Beacon Neighborhood Centers into Denver’s schools because I believe they are vital in addressing the needs of the whole child as well as their families.”

— Elaine Gantz Berman
Colorado State Board of Education



The schools keep their doors open beyond the hours of the traditional school day to engage students in extended learning opportunities and to address a range of community members’ needs. By making the school a place that helps parents — with their income, employment, and other needs — integrated service models reduce the alienation that many parents in underserved communities feel toward schools in general.¹ And, by aligning with evidence-based practices for young people, the centers promote healthy youth development and position students for success.

“The Neighborhood Center was my home away from home. It held me accountable and kept me focused on my goals. Now out of college and happily employed, I appreciate having had such an environment available to me to foster my innovation, my motivation and, ultimately, my success.”

— Yessica Holguin
former Skinner Middle School student

Denver’s Comprehensive School-Based Neighborhood Centers: School Statistics

School site	Free/ reduced-rate lunch	Neighborhood Centers managing partner
Cole K-8 School	94%	Catholic Charities
Lake Middle School	94%	Mi Casa Resource Center
Rishel Middle School	93%	Catholic Charities
Skinner Middle School	93%	Denver Public Schools Department of Extended Learning & Community Schools

Proven practices and effective interventions

Educational policy leaders from the national level down to the local level are advocating for improving student educational outcomes through extended learning beyond the traditional school day. The benefits to students from afterschool

¹Public/Private Ventures. 2009. The Case for School-Based Integration of Services: Changing the Ways Students, Families and Communities Engage with Their Schools.

programs, such as those offered by Denver's comprehensive school-based neighborhood centers, is well-documented. For example, an independent study of afterschool programs in Denver showed participation was associated with improved attendance and test scores, and lower dropout rates.²

“The centers are a proven model of collaboration between schools, community members, and local organizations in mobilizing resources to remove barriers that impede students' learning.”

— Nicole Veltzé
Principal, Skinner Middle School

In addition, afterschool programs help steer participants away from risk-taking behavior. Children and youth who regularly attend quality afterschool programs have lower incidences of drug-use, violence, and pregnancy.³



The benefits of school-based neighborhood centers are also evident for the schools, families and communities they serve.

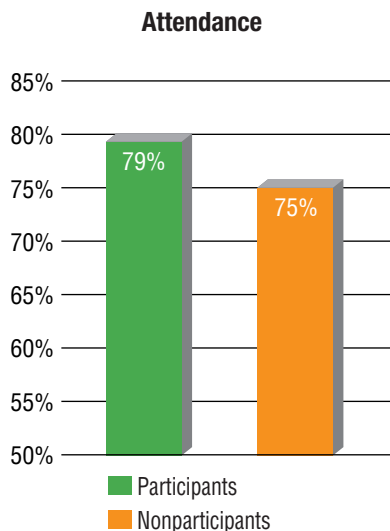
- **Families** – Increased family stability, communication with teachers and school involvement, and a greater sense of responsibility for their children's learning.
- **Schools** – Stronger parent-teacher relationships, increased teacher satisfaction, a more positive school environment, and greater community support.
- **Communities** – Increased security, heightened community pride, and better rapport among students and residents.⁴

²JVA Consulting, LLC. 2009. Out-of-School Time Evaluation Report, 2007–2008 School Year.

³Afterschool Alliance on WWW. Afterschool Programs: A Wise Public Investment. <www.afterschoolalliance.org>.

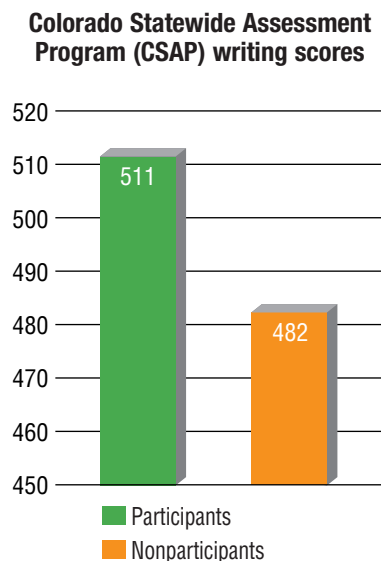
⁴Coalition for Community Schools on WWW. Community Schools Research Brief, 2000. <www.communityschools.org>.

Afterschool Programs Increase School Attendance, Grades 6-8



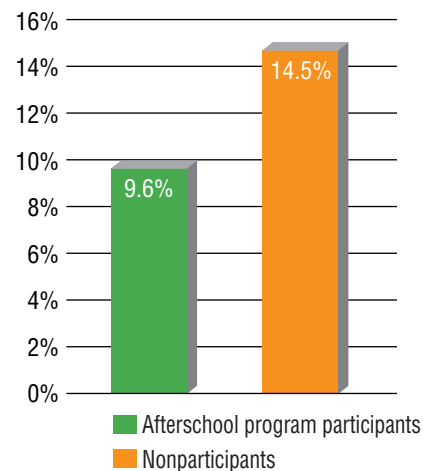
Source: JVA Consulting, 2009

Afterschool Programs Improve Writing Test Scores, Grades 6-8



Source: JVA Consulting, 2008

Afterschool Programs Lower Dropout Rates*



*Includes afterschool program participants and nonparticipants, beginning with the 2002-'03 school year, that had reached the 9th grade or higher by the 2007-'08 school year.

Source: JVA Consulting, 2009

Sustainable funding remains a critical priority

Demand for services and supports from Denver's comprehensive school-based neighborhood centers is increasing as public funding is decreasing. The financial health of these centers is in jeopardy.

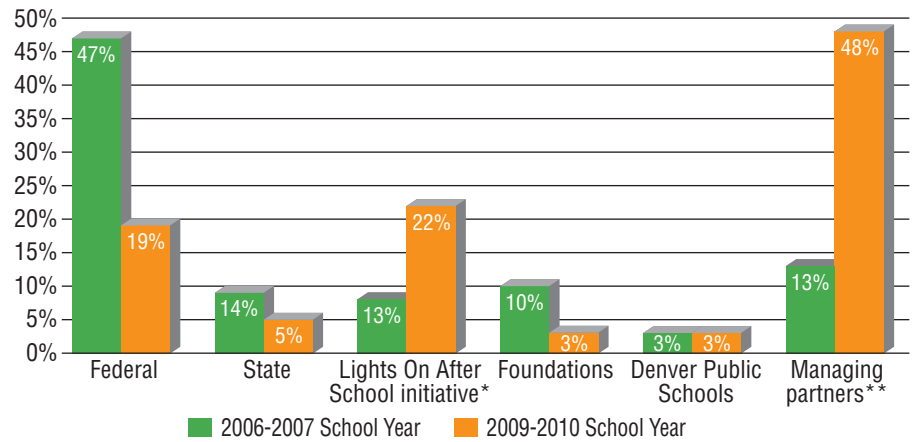
“Even in the toughest of economic times, we must remain committed to providing expanded school-based services that address the holistic needs of the children, youth, and families in Denver's most disadvantaged neighborhoods.”

— Paul López
Denver City Councilman

Traditionally, public funding has been central to the centers' sustainability and their capacity to meet the needs of students and families in their neighborhoods. Even when public dollars were available to support a comprehensive approach to learning, the funds did not cover all the costs. Proponents have had to continually raise additional funds from local agencies and private sources to make up for declines in federal and state support.

As managing partners are unable to withstand the increases in their share of funding, the centers are challenged to find resources to support their seamless approach to learning and community needs. Without additional assistance, these centers will have to eliminate services or close their doors completely.

Changes in Funding Sources for Denver's Comprehensive School-Based Neighborhood Centers



*Sponsored by the City of Denver, Denver Public Schools Foundation, and Mile High United Way
**Catholic Charities, Denver Public Schools Department of Extended Learning & Community Schools, and Mi Casa Resource Center

Exploring models of sustainability

Unlike some states, Colorado has no institutionalized state or local base funding for afterschool programs. Models of sustainable support from across the country can be instructive in planning how to ensure stability for Denver's school-based neighborhood centers.

- The Open Society Institute established a \$125 million challenge grant in 1998 to create sustainable public funding for afterschool programs in New York City. Since then, every level of government has increased its funding significantly. New York City's government, in particular, has provided more than \$110 million annually since the 2005 launch of the citywide Out-of-School Time Initiative.⁵
- In San Francisco, a portion of property taxes — 3 cents per \$100 of assessed value — goes to the Children's Fund. Afterschool programs comprise the fund's largest disbursement, with more than \$20 million supporting 130 programs annually.⁶
- Youth Community Connections, a coalition in Minnesota, helped pass state legislation in 2007 allocating \$5.3 million toward community learning centers.⁷

Your support is needed

You can help by voicing your support for the centers to civic leaders and others in your community and by donating to any of the centers' managing partners. Join with a growing number of partners committed to Denver's comprehensive school-based neighborhood centers who understand the long-term gains achieved from strengthening academic and social outcomes in distressed communities.

⁵Institute for Education and Social Policy. 2008. Public Funding for Comprehensive After-School Programs, 1998-2008.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Russell, L. March 2009. Financial Strategies to Support Citywide Systems of Out-of-School Time Programs. National League of Cities.

For more information, contact any of the organizations below.

