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## **SHRINKING AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS COULD HINDER CHILDREN'S SUCCESS**

### **New Jersey School Age Care Coalition (NJSACC) Releases New Survey Documenting Support for Afterschool**

April 1, 2010--High quality afterschool programs are a valued strategy for improving student outcomes, according to a new survey released by NJSACC, the network for New Jersey's afterschool communities. NJSACC surveyed more than 900 afterschool stakeholders, including staff at schools, afterschool programs government agencies, community organizations and foundations. Visit [www.njsacc.org](http://www.njsacc.org) for the survey report.

Survey respondents highlighted afterschool's role in strengthening children's social and emotional development. These skills lay a foundation for good study habits and engagement in school, which leads to improvements in grades, test scores and school behavior. More than 70% of participants told NJSACC that it is very important for afterschool programs to:

- Promote youth development and engagement (77%)
- Allow time for thinking, exploration and problem solving (75%)
- Teach social and life skills (73%)

"Teachers and afterschool staff recognize that kids need more than reading, writing and arithmetic if they are going to succeed in school and in careers," said NJSACC Executive Director Diane Genco. They need to be able to work with others, they need to learn how to keep their focus on assignments, they need to be able to think outside the box so they can adapt to changes in the classroom, and later, the workplace."

The survey also found broad support for improving the quality of afterschool programs. Seventy-one percent of respondents said that all afterschool programs should comply with New Jersey licensing requirements. Quality afterschool programs lead to better grades improved test scores and fewer behavior problems. These results aren't related to additional hours of traditional school work. Instead, the most successful afterschool programs offer activities that reflect children's interest, hire caring adults and design programs that are both fun and educational. They help children improve study habits, strengthen social skills work better with groups and start caring about school.

Survey respondents reinforced afterschool organizations' role as keeping children safe in appropriately staffed environments.

- 93% said it is very important for afterschool programs to employ staffs that serve as role models for young people.
- 90% said that it is very important for afterschool programs to provide a safe place for students to spend time when school is not in session.

Working families rely upon afterschool programs to keep children safe and productively engaged while adults aren't home. However, current research shows that afterschool programs are playing growing roles in students' academic success. "This survey holds an important message for everyone struggling with budgets, from local governments and school districts to the statehouse," said Genco. "Quality afterschool is a smart strategy to improve student outcomes. The cost of doing without afterschool is enormous."

NJSACC is currently working with school districts, community organizations, municipalities and afterschool programs to develop high quality, financially sustainable afterschool programs. For more information, call NJSACC at [sac@njsacc.org](mailto:sac@njsacc.org). To read the survey report, visit [www.njsacc.org](http://www.njsacc.org)

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### **About NJSACC**

NJSACC, the Network for New Jersey's Afterschool Communities offers technical assistance, training, and support to help New Jersey's afterschool communities thrive. The organization builds public awareness and support; offers guidance for parents, providers and advocates; strengthens relationships with policymakers, funders, practitioners and parents; and shares best practices. Founded in 1982, NJSACC works locally and statewide. For more information, see [www.njsacc.org](http://www.njsacc.org)