



Strategies for Supporting Effective Afterschool and Summer Learning & Enrichment Strategies

Jillian Meinhardt: Hi and thank you for joining us today. My name is Jillian Meinhardt, and I am the Policy Analyst for the K-12 Education team here at the National Governors Association. Welcome to NGA's webinar - Exploring Effective Strategies for Afterschool and Summer Learning and Enrichment Programs.

Governors across the country are emphasizing the importance of afterschool and summer learning and enrichment strategies as levers to further support academic supports and well-being. This webinar is a follow-up to our previous webinar - [Lessons Learned from Afterschool and Summer Learning Enrichment in 2021](#), which provided strategies to help accelerate learning and re-engage students through the disruption of COVID-19.

Both of these webinars are part of an ongoing series of 12 other [NGA webinars](#) designed to inform Governors of strategies for addressing K-12 student needs. All of these webinars and other resources, including promising practices on chronic absenteeism, [parent and family engagement](#), [cross-agency collaboration](#) and [comprehensive school safety](#) are available on the [NGA K-12 Education webpage](#), and additional resources discussed today will also be provided to viewers.

Today, I am honored to engage in a conversation with two experts in this area. First, we have Aaron Dworkin who is the Chief Executive Officer at the [National Summer Learning Association](#). Aaron is a national leader in education, out of school time and youth development fields. At the National Summer Learning Association, Aaron supports their network of over 15,000 program partners and leaders in the areas of program quality, partnerships, policy, public awareness and leadership development.

Second, we have Jodi Grant who is the Executive Director of [Afterschool Alliance](#). Jodi oversees federal policy efforts and supervises research to help national, state and local afterschool advocates and providers support, create and expand quality afterschool programs

Thank you, both of you, and welcome. We are so glad you're able to come back and join us. When we last spoke to you in November of 2021, we discussed how summer learning and afterschool models had changed since the pandemic, strategies for students to recover, and what summer 2022 may look like. Now that students have fully returned to school, please provide a brief overview of what has changed since we last spoke. Aaron, we can start with you.

Aaron Dworkin: Well, first of all, thank you for having me, Jillian and National Governors Association. Great to be with Jodi and anyone who's listening. So I will just share we've all collectively come through a global pandemic. And it's had a huge impact on our families and students and our workforce and our community's economy. Obviously, there was a huge investment made by the federal government that flowed into states which was from the ESSER dollars in the American Rescue Plan, which we're talking to you today on the day when the presidential budget was released, so we'll see what happens, but a lot of these dollars, and Jodi could share more, are set to expire, but there might be extensions that are offered, plus there may be some other additional resources. So there was a moment. There was high need, and there was a high opportunity. And we saw leaders at all levels in our education system and civic political system get involved and take action. And what does that mean? There was innovation in terms of programs, new states especially, we're creating programs, creating policies to serve more students to help them catch up from the academic negative effects of the pandemic. We have also seen a huge surge, and now a big response as well, to attend to the mental health challenges kids have faced. And there's a lot. There's a lot of data coming out about the negative effects of social media. But we had a crisis in the pandemic that exacerbated that. And then we talked about other opportunities that we want kids to have.

So when we talk about afterschool and summer learning, these are not silver bullets, but they're silver linings, because I think there has been a real national "aha" consensus that we need all resources to help kids catch up and prepare and go forward, and that afterschool programs, summer programs have the opportunity to kind of bring kids into new learning spaces, into contact with new mentors, new partnerships, a chance to build new skills they might not get access to during the school year or school day. And then also, our Governors specifically, I'll just share, have a leading role to kind of bring together all the resources in their state to help kids and we've seen a lot of that and a lot of focus on using data to kind of inform practice. So I'll stop there. Jodi could give way more, and then I'm happy to get more specific.

Jodi Grant: So first I'll just start with thank you, Jillian, it's an honor to be here. Aaron, I always enjoy doing anything that I can with you and the National Summer Learning Association, and I think Aaron said a lot.

So I don't want to repeat what he said, but I do want to flag a big thank you to the Governors. If you go to the [Engage Every Student webpage](#), there is literally a map of all across the country of shining examples where states and then some local districts use some of their COVID dollars to really make a difference in the afterschool space, and I

think the Governors that had a set aside for recovery, many Governors were really shining examples of being able to provide holistic, comprehensive support through afterschool and summer in partnership with local community based organizations, faith based organizations to meet the needs of each local community with those federal dollars. So it's really exciting to me to look at some of the innovations that happened at the state level, thanks to Governors.

And I think that what we're seeing now is more and more of our students are adjusting to whatever the new norm is and that things are different. And that it's really important to understand what we learned in COVID, that learning is happening all the time, that it happens inside and outside the classroom that there's some really creative things that can be done, including getting credit for work that's done outside the school classroom in a afterschool classroom or summer learning program that we should be embracing to make learning of the future available to our students, now.

Jillian Meinhardt: Thank you, both of you, and what I'm really hearing is the funding and the partnerships are really important for this work to happen. So Aaron, keeping in mind the current landscape, first, what are the challenges students and educators are facing, and then what are some innovative and high quality models for summer learning and enrichment. And are there particular states that are really supporting these conditions when it comes to districts, schools and community organizations for these high quality models?

Aaron Dworkin: Sure, well, I mean challenges, there are always challenges. But I think that we have the ability with the leaders we have in this country and are kind of the goodwill and the kind of desire to help students come back. I think for a long time we would have to spend time convincing people that afterschool and summer programs was a good thing to do. Now, I think the question is, just how do we do it and scale it? And I mean, there will be people who will question, but I'm just saying that the majority of conversations we're in right now, are like, okay, we understand there's a lot of research to show the evidence of effective practices. And this goes back to [RAND longitudinal studies](#), [the Wallace Foundation's funded research](#), [The National Academy of Sciences](#) has conducted their own research to show what works, and we have a lot of best practices to share, so no one has to reinvent the wheel, which is one of the reasons I think people in a moment of emergency felt like there was enough body of evidence, enough track record, enough institutional infrastructure to kind of dole out these dollars and have enough partners to make sure it reaches kids and families who need it most.

With that said, there's still workforce challenges and Jodi is very deeply involved in this. We do what we can here, but staffing challenges and just people being burnt out in the education field. It was so hard during the pandemic, and then a lot of people retired. And now we need to get new people, and we want to get people who are trained and reflect the communities of the kids that they're serving. So there's a lot of workforce challenges, especially in the out-of-school time field and that we're trying to come up with some creative solutions.

I would also just say, there's always a need to kind of break down the silos. And you say, talk about partners and partnerships, so a lot of funding went to school districts. It was highly encouraged that they share the funding, but it wasn't required, and some did, and some did not. And so you have a whole field and industry of nonprofit organizations and even other youth serving government agencies, and today, how can we get more aligned with schools? And so I think, where we've seen great examples, it was in Oklahoma, Alabama has done great work, that kind of worked in closely with districts around summer programs, making summer learning available, especially. I was just with [Tuscaloosa](#) the other day, and then seeing what they've done. [Tulsa](#). People who are using these programs, I think this is innovative, as a stepping stone for training the next generation of principals. So if you wanted to get hired to be a principal in Tulsa, you had to be as assistant principal to the head of a summer program, and it had to do well in order to get more attendance.

I think there's been a lot of recognition also on the combination of academics, plus mental health, plus physical fitness, plus enrichment. And when you want to do all those things for all those kids, you also recognize that no one could do it alone. People who are great at teaching math might not be great at teaching music, and people who are great at teaching basketball might not be great at giving mental health. So somebody's got to braid all these together, and at the national level, Jodi mentioned, the Engage Every Student Initiative, we're both part of it with the US Department of Education, there's a lot of collaboration happening, but more needs to happen at the state level and the district level. And I think we're seeing that. And Jodi could also go through many states. I was just on with New Jersey and Tennessee. Again, Nebraska's got a program. So there's just so many efforts that were started with these dollars. And now the question is, how do we keep it going? But I think there is enough goodwill that hopefully people want to.

Jodi Grant: So I just wanted to say that I think it's really important to be thinking of the comprehensive and holistic needs of our kids. And so one of the things that I hope during COVID happened, when we talk to parents, they were every bit as concerned about the loss of social opportunities for their kids, healthy interactions with their peers, healthy

interactions with adults, as they were about the academic loss. And so I think that one of the things again and I applaud the places where this happened was a lot of our kids, sure they needed help with tutoring, but that alone is not the same as a comprehensive program where kids get to follow their passions, where they have opportunities to interact with each other, where they have meals. Because it's going throughout the time when their parents are at work, not just for an extra hour, and I think that there's been, as Aaron said, a real recognition of the value of that our field can bring, and the recognition that a third of our workforce are teachers. But that there's all these outsiders that are educators in a community, whether they're at a library or museum, or they're, working at a company. They can really provide, some of their musicians, terrific learning opportunities for our kids.

I think one of the challenges is funding in places where there were COVID dollars. Those dollars are evaporating, and that means we can serve fewer kids if we can't find a way to replenish them. And there's several states: California, Michigan, Vermont, New Mexico, Minnesota, Alabama, Georgia, where they're really looking at replenishing some of those funds which are great. There's also a real need for us in the field to recognize what it costs to be an afterschool educator, and I think for far too long, we have an incredibly committed field where people are doing it because of the value they see in the work, they're changing lives, but that we can't compete at minimum wage with McDonald's or Starbucks or someone else, especially when they raise wages. And for many of our kids, if they're relying on public or philanthropic funds and those don't go up and we need and should be paying our staff more, that means that we're going to see fewer kids, or we're going to see a higher staff to student ratio which we absolutely don't want, because we really want to insist that quality is there.

So I think there's challenges. I think the good news, and for anyone watching this webinar, I encourage you to go to our website, www.afterschoolalliance.org and to Aaron's website, National Summer Learning Association, there are all sorts of toolkits, best practices, even with the staffing shortages, some really creative things being done with engaging youth to be near-peer instructors in afterschool programs, so that you have older kids getting their own afterschool program with work experience, working with some of the younger kids, working with colleges and community colleges and universities to try and fill this hole in our field of needing more staff.

Jillian Meinhardt: Thank you, both, for touching on some of those really important parts, especially the holistic lens, which we will get to. So I'm so glad you brought that up as well as those workforce challenges. And it sounds like states are really using innovative models both in afterschool and summer learning for those workforce challenges. I know we talk a

lot about principal pipelines in a traditional route but hearing that innovative model of having an assistant principal at a summer learning program, and then in a school is really great, as well as getting those students out there and volunteers. That's all great as well.

Jodi Grant: I just want to jump in and say it's not just principals, so it could be teachers, a lot of our workforce, it might be paraprofessionals that can work in afterschool and go get a teaching degree, more and more looking at things like social workers, psychiatrists. All the kinds of people that we want working with kids. The more they can do some of their training and their time in the afterschool and summer space, it's a win-win for everyone and sometimes for some of these students, the hours of afterschool and summer make it a lot easier for college and university students to do it in our space as well.

Jillian Meinhardt: Yeah, thank you for bringing up all those things, we know all those support staff, social workers, psychologists, anyone in the school is really important for student success, and also thank you for naming all those resources for our viewers today, we will be listing all those resources with our presentation here. So as we discuss some of those policy conditions and move to important levers for enabling this work, are there Governor and state roles that you have seen be helpful in promoting this work? And, Jodi, we can start with you first.

Jodi Grant: So, absolutely. I think Governors have a huge bully pulpit so they can really share best practices and examples of what's going on in communities. I would encourage Governors to go out to some of the sites that we've highlighted and showcase what can really be done in their state, what's being done in their state.

Obviously, Governors can also make a huge difference with the funding. So, looking at federal funding streams that are available to afterschool, and then looking into state funding streams, and even encouraging some of the local funding streams, because there's a lot of creativity that can go in. We're talking about COVID dollars, we talk about federal funding for afterschool, but there's also federal child care dollars that can be used for younger students to do afterschool and summer and sometimes there's state barriers that Governors can help eliminate, to make it more possible to blend and braid some of the funding that's there. So I think Governors are actually, from where I sit, that's where all the hope is right now is. Governors are modeling state programs based on the needs of their specific states. And it is really exciting to see what's coming out.

I would also say, and many of the Governors know this there are [50 State Afterschool Network](#). They are tremendous partners to you in providing technical assistance resources, expertise on what is going on at the state, and one of the things we were most

excited about is Arkansas, because we haven't talked about Arkansas yet, is the state network working very closely with the Governor to make sure that federal funds were targeted to the communities that needed it most, with these holistic resources. So I really do think the future of our field, the future of thinking about education is bigger than schools is with Governors.

And one last really creative thing that I want to flag is that we're spending a lot of time, I mentioned it earlier, on looking at opportunities for students to get credit towards graduation in work they do in afterschool, but this is really big for career and tech ed, too. It could be a coding class, or it could be an outdoor ed class. But it could be a job, an internship, an apprenticeship, there's a real opportunity to take the learning that's happening outside the classroom and use it to meet students where they are, but also to help students identify real jobs in their community that they can get training for now. And I was just in South by Southwest (SXSW) with a program in New Orleans, where it's called [unCommon Construction](#), where they literally have an afterschool program, where kids are paid where they're learning construction and learning skills and a bunch of them are hired literally right out of high school into good jobs because of this afterschool program. So I think we need to be thinking really creatively about how we can use our space in communities to get students excited about and prepared for the jobs that exist where they live.

Aaron Dworkin: Yeah, I'll just add I agree with everything. I think, first of all, there's a long precedent of Governors actually being involved in out-of-school time, not just from funding, but even from a direct program level. There are many states, and I know New Jersey's one because I worked at it, that have Governor's Schools that are these summer programs. In New Jersey, there was one for teenagers to learn civic leadership, but then also one for STEM and that the Governor created this. This was started under Tom Kean years ago, and it continues to this day. And so it's interesting. There's a precedent where the model was, they would take local high school students from that state, bring them together for four weeks, so overnight at a state college, and have them really delve into this experience and learn what are the issues facing the state. Again, there are examples where Governors are doing this and running direct service programs.

So with that said, here's another creative example I saw over the years which was in the last few years. So a lot of summer youth employment we've talked about are very important, Jodi's mentioned, which is something I agree wholeheartedly, we want to not just get kids paid in these opportunities but get them to earn course credit, community service hours. It's a big thing that Governors could drive. In New York City, where they have tens of thousands of teens are in their summer youth employment program, there

was a challenge where if you were from the five boroughs of New York for a long time, you had to only get a job within those five boroughs. But there would be in a summer camp in upstate New York, like Camp Fiver, near Colgate, they said, we want to hire students from the Bronx and Brooklyn to come up here. So they advocated to change the language, and how that program was set up. So now you could live in and get paid by New York City but for the summer you could go to upstate New York and work in a program and serve kids and get all these great experiences.

So that's something I think really important for Governors when you have urban areas and you have rural areas. Something that we have supported also are these kind of summer camp school partnerships. And the reason I bring up these summer camps is because they're often in rural counties, and they are usually vacant for 10 months of the year. So these are the resources that states have, that a Governor and their team from their perspective could say, oh, look what we have! We have kids who aren't being served. We have these facilities that aren't being used. Who's going to tie it together? And I just think people know North Carolina has a huge number of summer camp facilities. And often it might be kids who aren't even from North Carolina who get to use them. So again, who's going to utilize them?

We saw it in Wisconsin Boys and Girls Club had their own summer camps and Milwaukee Public Schools, and we kind of incentivized them with some planning grants to partner together. And now Milwaukee public schools is spending seven million more dollars on these partnerships between school districts and camps. So I'm just saying, there's a lot of other examples like that. So rural matters, I think utilizing state colleges, so not just any colleges but the colleges that the Governor has more influence with, right state colleges. How do you get the staff? How to use those facilities?

I was at another in Pennsylvania, you know empty dorm rooms sitting there, and this is something Jodi mentioned, we like to say we want all these afterschool programs, summer programs to be school-aligned, but they don't have to always be school building based. So as long as you're coordinating, it can happen. You can have in Boston a science program that takes place in the museum with a certified science teacher. It doesn't have to be in the hot, maybe really sticky school buildings the kids already been in all year. So just looking. And they call the city as a classroom, like in the fifth quarter of learning. How do you look at all the resources? So every state has different things, parks and rec, you might have beautiful parks where kids could go hiking and whatnot and give them access to. So how are you pulling in all the different agencies, all the different resources of your state, tying them together, especially to give these afterschool and summer programs.

Public housing is another one. We see a lot of folks live in public housing, affordable housing that might not have much to do in the afterschool and summer time. So how do we support them to be more in line? And then, last thing, we know Governors have a huge play, and I echo what Jodi said about putting a spotlight, is also bringing in the private sector, they know better what are the industries that are strong for that state, what are the job opportunities. So it's not any job, but what are the jobs specifically in that state? What are the industries based in that state? So if you were in California, it might be entertainment or Silicon Valley might be more technology. Obviously, we care about STEM everywhere, but some could be more industrial based jobs and whatnot. And really taking a look and aligning their goals, their economic development goals with the out of school time opportunities, and that that'll bring in some more dollars and more partners.

Jodi Grant: Yeah, and I wouldn't underestimate the facilities. I mean, I got my start in a summer learning program where we actually used a university and we brought students, many of whom their parents had not been to college to a college campus, and they got to enjoy living on a college campus and seeing what it felt like to be a college student and feeling like they belonged. So I think there's all sorts of resources that Governors have to highlight those opportunities, particularly for the kids that wouldn't have those opportunities otherwise. And I do want to again emphasize, I think for students today, their learning has to be relevant. We have to show them why it matters, and there's no better way to do that than to show them how it connects to a job in their community. So you know, I've seen students making six figures coming out of North Dakota programs where they're learning how to weld, so if they can start really seeing that connection, plus, it gives them a sense of autonomy and empowerment when it really is a real job that they're holding down.

Jillian Meinhardt: Thank you for these examples and the highlights on the states. And again, partnerships, I'm hearing, is a key theme throughout this entire webinar. Whether it's the private sector, summer camps, universities, and the roles that Governors really play in connecting all of those together.

And, as you know, many of the State of the State addresses are completed, and the Governors really mentioned this year, as every year, workforce and career and technical education opportunities. So we know that's a really big opportunity as well. And just like you said about really making sure the learning is aligned, and also students are excited about what they're learning.

So as we get to that, Aaron, we know that summer school used to have a negative connotation - if you had to go to summer school, maybe that meant you failed or

something was wrong. But what are the strategies being implemented now to really change this connotation and to provide those additional enrichment programs, especially for the students who may not have access to those otherwise?

Aaron Dworkin: Sure. So I think it is important for your audience to know we've been working very hard for decades to change kind of the image of what summer school was. So that's one of the reasons we use the term "summer learning." So if you take the main academic goals you have of traditional summer school around math, reading, STEM, and you combine it with the great civic leadership, community building, skill building opportunities, you might get through an afterschool and summer program, at least, if it happens in the summer months, we would call that summer learning.

So, just like you, said Jillian, it used to be historically over last hundred years, if you told anyone the reputation summer school, it was a punishment. If you had to go, you didn't want to go. You failed. You had to go for remedial. It was repetitive, you didn't have a choice, and it was kind of academic only and it had to take place in the school building.

So now we like to say, summer learning could be the opposite of all of that. It's not only academics, it's academic, enrichment, sports, health and fitness, but also you can make it so engaging, so hands-on, like we always see in the afterschool programs, that it's so fun, it's so real world that you could make it voluntary, and kids still want to go. And it doesn't just have to be content and information you might not have gotten to or learned, but it could be brand new information that you don't get to. So when in the afterschool and summer space, it's real estate development. All these kids are watching cranes go up and build buildings right around in their neighborhoods, often by people who are not from their neighborhoods about to make a lot of money and with gentrification, right? Well who's going to teach them about that? There's probably no time in the core day during the school curriculum to learn about how to make money in real estate. But Jodi and I work with a project we created is called Big City Builders and all these middle schoolers we're kind of learning about what does it take? It is a very chronological order of what it takes. So I just give that as an example, where kids can look outside their window, their building and the office buildings they've never been in and how are they going to go visit and see what's going on?

So again, I just think that the workforce is huge, and there's so many opportunities to kind of bring in all these different partners, sports teams if you have them, whether they're college sports teams or professional sports teams, they want to do a lot in the community they're running. They get very involved in afterschool and summer. A lot of celebrities. I'm almost surprised there's so many celebrities, whether it's Katie Perry, Matthew

McConaughey, Arnold Schwarzenegger, people who want to give back with their platforms, you know what they do, they decide they want to create afterschool and summer programs for kids. So there's a lot of partners, celebrity partners, that can kind of be utilized to amplify.

And I just also want to emphasize I always give these two examples, Jodi has heard me so I apologize to her, but I talk a lot about hospitals, medical schools. We're creating in this, especially in the summer, all these programs to teach minority students how to be doctors and be pre-med. It's such a long haul to become a doctor. So if you don't know in high school that you might want to be, you don't go to college to become pre-med, then all that. So there's all these hospitals doing that.

And as a corporate example, I just want to share the New York Times, I always talk about, if you read their newspaper, they have a lot of ads for the school of the New York Times. So even they're running afterschool and summer programs, now they charge a lot of money to people who get to learn how to be a reporter and shadow journalists, but it doesn't have to be such an expensive model. And all of us could create these programs in our state, in our communities. And I think there's a lot of templates that Jodi lifts up and my organization, www.summerlearning.org is our website, and also just helping people find programs. Governors could help us with a better job.

So now, people have this funding. They've created programs. Who's going to let all the families know about it, and especially right now in March and to let people know to sign up? So we have a website called www.discoversummer.org, there are other similar websites, ours has 60,000 programs right now. Hopefully, it will get up to 100,000 where families could type in their zip code and all the programs near them. So, but again, the bully pulpit of a Governor who could kind of put that spotlight on that so students know and families know that these programs exist and will sign up.

Jodi Grant: I think the other thing is that afterschool is the place, and summer, where Governors can really leave their mark on learning and education in a way that so much is driven by local school boards, local districts, and our space has a lot more flexibility to really be individualized. So if a Governor is really concerned about workforce, if a Governor is really concerned about career tech ed, if a Governor is concerned about outdoor ed, mental health, there's some real opportunities there. I also want to say that there's two states where there's some incredible innovation, which began in California and in California, the State Department of Education actually has an [office](#) where somebody is in charge of all things afterschool. It's really extraordinary. It helps with all sorts of quality, all sorts of technical assistance, knowing what's going on. And now

Michigan has just developed an [office](#) that is, going to be focusing on afterschool and summer as well. And so I think the more states think about actually having somebody at a senior level in their department of education, or could be, department of commerce, that's really focused on our space, the more that can help really bring up quality, and bring up evidence of the difference that afterschool and summer's making in communities.

And as I said again, I can't iterate enough how much this is a real opportunity for Governors to have a big stamp on a child, both, you know, young children and older children and their learning.

Aaron Dworkin: And can I add to that? I'd like to add to that, which is such a great point Jodi, I think we both believe that finding an afterschool, a high quality afterschool and summer program for every student in your state is a solvable challenge. This does not have to be a persistent, chronic condition that we all just live with that there are millions of students who don't have programs every year. We know how to create programs. We have lots of models of what works. We have lots of research. We have existing programs that could be replicated and we know where the kids are. So who's going to get the kids into the program and pull all the partners together? So we have all the ingredients I think a Governor has like a chef role here with their team to tie it all together. And that's what's exciting, I think. We talk about legacy of a Governor, is that you could say, "Hey, we took it from 15%, 20% of our students in programs afterschool, summer to 50, 75% to a huge increase that now it's just expected. And I think that's something that's really important, I think what COVID has done, and at least my opinion, is it moved the discussion of afterschool and summer programs from like a nice to have, to a need to have. And people get that. I hope they get that. And our job is to keep it like that.

Jodi Grant: And we've been focusing on students and the workers of tomorrow, but I also want to highlight the workers of today, because this is very much a main street issue for many of our parents. Parents are working. They want their kids to be doing something productive during those hours afterschool or over the summer, I can tell you, when there's been threats to cut afterschool, we hear from parents all over the country. They're the dental hygienists and the dentists that can't run their business if their hygienist isn't there, and hygienists can't be there if their fourth grader doesn't have afterschool. And so I think it's a huge issue for working parents and their employers right now. There's been studies of like hundreds of billions of dollars in lost productivity if parents don't have afterschool and summer. And I say, even for parents that are virtual, if your kid is home, you're worried about what your kid is up to and so having them somewhere where they're engaged and active is really key.

I would say also in places where there's high juvenile crime, we know that juvenile crime spikes when kids get out of school, it's because they don't have anything better to do. It is much, much lower when kids are in high quality afterschool and summer programs. That saves tons and tons of money by not incarcerating kids and not to mention it gives the kids a chance to have real success in life. So there's that issue.

And then there's a third piece, which is when we even think about our national economy and our national security, far too many kids, almost 80% of our kids, aren't eligible for the military, and we need a strong military, and they're not eligible because they have a criminal record, they don't have the physical fitness, or they don't have the academics. And when you look to afterschool and summer, those are big, big ways to address all three of those issues. So you know, there's a lot beyond just the students of the future, but the right now, that Governors should be taking into mind too as reasons to support these programs.

Jillian Meinhardt: Those are all great examples. And what I'm hearing is not only the partnerships but how to connect those partnerships. And we really need to make the connection happen and Governors play a really big role in that as well. And, Aaron, I appreciate you mentioning the difference of language between summer school and summer learning, because we know that language has such an influence on our behaviors and our thoughts and our feelings, that term alone in our framework, and even changing the framing around summer school, and that summer learning and afterschool is a solvable challenge, when we think about it like that, then that gives everyone a little more hope to know that we can do that as well. So thank you for that.

I know we touched on the holistic lens and how important parent and family engagement are, just as Jodi you were saying, and that well-being process. So how can afterschool and summer programs really incorporate those components effectively? So, Jodi, I know you had already started with that parent piece, so go ahead.

Jodi Grant: Yes, and I'll say a lot of it is really every community is unique in what resources it has to tap into for afterschool. But one of the nice things about afterschool is a couple of things: one, the hours are often a little easier and we do before school as well, in many communities for parents we interact with the adults that are working with their kids. There can be activities just like in school that we bring in where they do movie nights or game nights and parents can come in. You'd have afterschool programs that are doing GED programs or other programs for parents and bringing them in. But I think the real strength too is bringing the whole community. And so, particularly if there's a language

barrier, there may be an afterschool instructor that knows that language that knows that culture, that can serve as a conduit between the parent and what's going on in the school. And I've also seen extraordinary things, I was in Fairbanks, Alaska, and the children were learning about their native heritage in their afterschool program, and they were doing robotic hands and they were having amazing snacks and learning all of these different things that were really relevant to that particular school and the needs of that community. So I think it's really an extraordinary opportunity.

The other thing I would say is, it's really important, I think, and you heard this from when Aaron talked about summer learning as opposed to summer school, that our programs are voluntary. Kids can walk. Parents can walk. So they have to want to be there. So it means from day one, we have to figure out what's going to be engaging to them. What's going to be exciting to them. And then, how do we make sure it's a learning experience. And a lot of that is because it's project based, because it's hands on, and it is driven by student passion. So I think that's an important thing, too. And to incorporate that student voice and choice into our actual program, even for the youngest kids, like they have opinions, do you want to be taking a science class and working with goo, or do you want to be taking a cooking class which is equally science based, but is a different way of doing science to get them engaged and feeling some ownership of their afternoons.

Aaron Dworkin: Yeah, I think engaging families is a huge piece of youth development and education. We need them. We don't want to be fighting against them. We need their buy in, obviously. For teens who are getting paid, that could be helpful to their family, actually the paycheck that they bring home, sometimes the food is helpful, too, but I think there's a role, as Jodi was saying, to hire more families, have at least a parent on your board, a Family Advisory Board, we both work with the National PTA, we want families to be partners in this work here, and nobody wants to be alone. I think that there's not just a daycare issue, but I think when we can get programs that have multiple siblings involved that makes life easier for families, because one of the big challenges for kids attending is that they have to go home and watch their siblings. So how can we get all siblings or both children into different programs, or maybe the same program, one's working in it, one's not. So I just think there's different ways to be more creative about how to engage families.

And another interesting thing that I always appreciate, and prior to this job, I was National President of the Network of Afterschool All Stars, we used to work with families all across the country, and one thing that was always powerful for students, but also for their parents or caregivers, was when they had the opportunity to educate and share what they learned to their family. And you a real anecdote, just the [4-H](#), one of the largest youth

organizations in America, probably the world, was developed by the US Department of Agriculture in the 1800s. And they did it. They taught all these through the youth program. They taught kids new farming skills and new techniques that that they brought to their parents and their grandparents who own the farms and that's how they got the parents to learn and adopt some new techniques. And then eventually, the kids took over the farms. And that was a way. So my point is, you could get through young people a lot of impact on families, too. I was once in an activity with a student where it was like a financial decision career fair of some kind and it would basically, the students learned about whether or not they should buy a car, a used car, lease a car. What's the best way to do it? And then the parents had to come around and get advice. and I think they all learned a lot from their kids through the afterschool summer program. So I'm just saying, education goes both ways and there's an opportunity for everyone to benefit.

Jillian Meinhardt: That's great. Those are really great strategies to engage parents and their kids, and especially when we give youth voice and control and to feel like they have some options in this, as well as bringing parents in and addressing those cultural barriers is really great when we do this.

I know we touched on funding, but as there was an influx of funding, and as there might be not as much anymore, what are your recommendations to ensure programs are sustainable as we go forward? Aaron, we can start with you.

Aaron Dworkin: Well, I think an important thing for Governors who are making their travel agendas for this summer and during the school year is get out to see these programs and bring some of the more influential, well-resourced allies you have in your state with you to see it. So we're not just kind of talking theoretically. Come to the school, see an afterschool program, go to the Boys Girls Club, go to the campsite to see, go to the summer youth and really see it. Be interviewed by the students, be a full participant for an hour, really understand what we're talking about here. And if they've had children of their own, remember what experiences they paid happily sometimes without blinking or thinking, and put their own children in. And that's some we always care about data and quality, but my litmus test is if you're visiting a program or you're running a program, and it's not one that you would yourself pay money for your own child to be in, it's not good enough, it's not good enough for someone else's child. You know it's not good enough for your child, not good enough for someone else. So just understanding that in a real way, I think will be very helpful.

But in terms of resources, we have a lot of resources, we could always use more. But again, people could give what they could give. So you know, again, when during COVID,

when everything got shut down, you'd see Parks and Recs centers say I have a thousand vans sitting in my parking lot, and a library says, I have a million books and a restaurant, says I have a million meals. And Google says, I have Chromebooks, right? And then somebody brought them all. So it's not that everyone has unlimited resources, but people have what they have to give. And again, maybe it's going through your own budget and say, what are we spending money on? And how can I lean on some people? If I need more food for meals are there folks who could help there? If I need more clothes, do I need T-shirts? What is it exactly, supplies, books, materials and I think, between the government sector, between the nonprofit sector, between the corporate sector, between the philanthropy sector, when you tie those resources together, and if we're efficient, and if we're coordinated, to be more efficient, you could stretch these dollars. Do we want more money? Do we need more money? Yes, but money is out there, and then what we need are the people to tie it together. And that's again. I just come back to the Governors and their teams having the perspective of what is out there and how do you make the investments people make it also good for them.

But sometimes as a nonprofit organization, or sometimes as a government agency, we're always asking people to help us, donate to us, but the question is not just what you give to us, but is how we can make this summer program, this afterschool program good for their business goals. Jodi's outlined so many it could be about employee retention. Or it could be volunteerism. Companies say, I want to bring a thousand employees to work with kids in the summer and do this and that. Alright, if that's where you want, we could do that, but can we tie these resources.

So I think there could be more. But for the moment, I think there are quite a bit of resources out there that if we utilize them properly, and maybe even share some resources, not just sharing the dollars, but even sharing some of the operation burden. Does every organization need its own web designer? Can we get one? Can we do some kind of collective bulk rate things that will help us save a few dollars, so more dollars could go to serve kids.

Jodi Grant: So I would just say that Governors are in a really unique position because they see everything. So when I'm talking about whether it's military readiness, whether it's crime, whether it's the jobs that are needed now, and the jobs are going to be needed in the future of the state, Governors see that in a way that nobody else does, and they can make that case. I do think bringing the business case is really important, like talking to business leaders, what are they looking for? Because I'm sure if it's not happening in the afterschool programs, it can be. And really connecting that link about how we said before, how this is really essential for student success. School is important, but it's not the only

thing that shapes a student, and if we want them to succeed in our states in the future, we can really be working to do that.

I would also say that Governors can play a really important role by working with intermediaries. So whether it is the 50 State Networks that they can work with or whether it's creating a position in their administration that's focused on afterschool, that can help do a lot of what Aaron started talking about where you're coordinating an amazing musician that's teaching music classes, and they can treat multiple programs right in multiple parts. So it doesn't have to be piecemeal and I always say when you leverage things in our space, suddenly one plus one equals three or four, because you're getting more bang for your buck in what you're doing. So I think not forgetting the role of intermediaries, or even the potential for having somebody in state government who's really focused on developing this space and maximizing what it can do for the State.

Aaron Dworkin: Can I add one other thing, Jillian, that I think that's interesting about fundraising, at least for some, is that there's always a big emphasis on the most well-known, largest foundations and corporate partners, which is great, you know everyone's like, let's call Amazon right? Or let's call Walmart. But there is a person in the community who owns three gas stations, who could make a donation and cares more locally than maybe others, but doesn't get asked, maybe they could give \$10,000 and support a project or a program, but there is somehow these middle level, smaller business owners and they want to be philanthropists, they are not going to be Bill Gates, but they could do their part, and I think sometimes we forget to ask them and engage them.

Jodi Grant: And I think that's huge for apprenticeships and internships, too, especially if we start giving kids credit for that. Where we can really start helping main street in our communities and creating real opportunities for our kids to see themselves continuing on in their communities.

Aaron Dworkin: Totally, and Jillian and I went to a conference last summer, it was the School Guidance Counselor Association Conference, and there were all these trade unions there and they were all saying, we have so many jobs. Many of our union members retired. If you're an elevator repairman, and if you if you fix air conditioners in Miami in July, you're making six figures right? Or you could actually make more than that because you could name your price. And these are jobs that can't be outsourced. They're not jobs that AI can do and so they're real positions. I think, knowing, like Jodi said, know your state better than anyone else. Where's the lack of jobs? Where's the opportunity for jobs? What is the need and then use afterschool and summer fields, and our partners, and Jodi and I,

and everyone we represent, to kind of get aligned with you and kind of help them implement their job.

Jillian Meinhardt: Thank you for all those great tips. I'm hearing again that community engagement piece is so important and how we utilize that and the partnerships, the connections, sharing the resources, and even that changing the frame of mind that there are resources out there, how do we get them together, share and be most impactful. So as we wrap up here, what would be your final advice to Governors? And what are you both excited about in your upcoming work? And, Jodi, we can start with you.

Jodi Grant: So my message to Governors would be that we're here to help you. So please reach out to us, reach out to NSLA, reach out to your state networks. We have a wealth of resources, research, best practices that we want to help you make high quality afterschool and summer learning available to all the students in your states. And what I am really excited about is the nimbleness of our field to adapt to the changing needs of our communities, and I think we saw that very quickly with COVID, where there were learning hubs and food delivery and lesson delivery and all sorts. I went to one community in Leadville, Colorado, where they literally took a school bus and had it going around from community to community to bring resources to kids. And I think that same kind of innovation is happening now, as we think about what is the learning of the future? And what's the role that our field can play in really complimenting school to prepare our students for that.

Aaron Dworkin: Yeah, I wholeheartedly agree. I think if my message to Governors is one, it's know your numbers. How many kids in your state are you trying to reach? Really, know how many that their families could afford or their districts can afford to put them in program. So how many are you reaching that can't access or afford a program otherwise, and focus on that, and then focus on are you serving more in 2024 than 2023? And what is your goal for 2025 and hold the state accountable and say, this is our goal. We want to get to a certain percentage or certain number of students and families served and these are the areas where no programs exist, so we're going to go set up some program. Make data informed decisions, hold your stakeholders accountable, hold yourself accountable and then make progress towards your goals.

I think it's also like we've said all along here, collect the dots before you connect the dots. What's going on already, do a state landscape report of afterschool and summer. There might already be one. You might already have that already happening. But Jodi has research. We have some research. We have people who can help you get that information, so know what's going on and then they have the pulpit, call the meeting and

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with enough time to plan, so it could be with months ahead of the school year, so the next school year, so everyone could figure out how we get more kids into afterschool in enough time, is it before the summer starts so we can get more kids into summer programs? They can do that. Everyone will come. Everyone will come if they call the meeting, but they have to call it. They have to get it on the agenda. Give people enough lead time, and people will hear.

And then also to just remember what's fun and what's exciting and why it's worth their time is that afterschool and summer programs provide a chance not only to improve the skills of students, but also the adults. So it's a kind of a workforce development, workforce training opportunity and all this, it's a chance to innovate. So all and any good idea you want before you scale it, test it out in the afterschool program, in the summer program. Make sure it works, work out the kinks before you do that, and then it's a chance to have impact in a deep way, both at the policy level, at the program level and then at the personal level for their citizens and their state. Let them be the Governor that all these folks could say, I was in a program that my Governor supported, it changed my life and that's why I chose a career, or why I chose a certain college because I was in an afterschool program or summer program that my state invested in me and now, I want to give back.

Jillian Meinhardt: Well, thank you so much, Jodi and Aaron, for this great conversation and sharing your insights and expertise with the Governors' offices. Viewers, please note that all reports and resources discussed today will be attached to this recording, and until next time, thank you for joining us and have a great day.