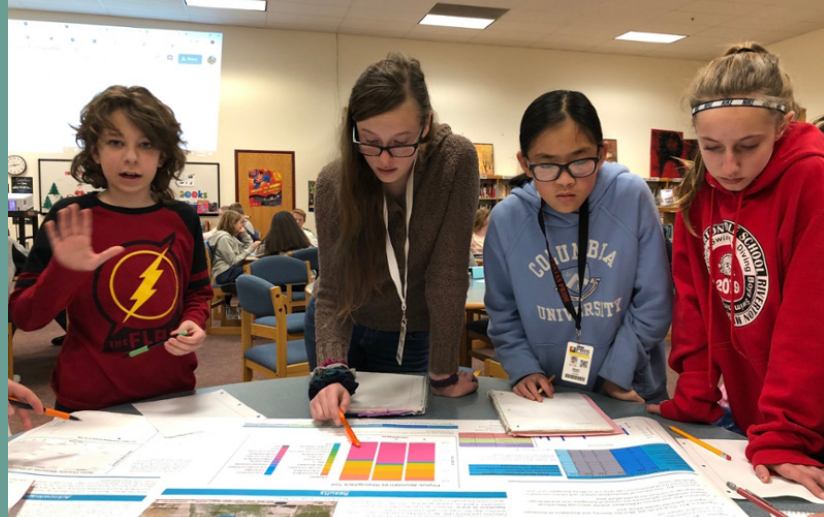


Supporting Learning Recovery Through Out of School Time with ESSER III Funding



Out of school time—afterschool, before school, summer, and expanded learning programs—complements academic learning and is critical to youth development, our economy, and our communities.

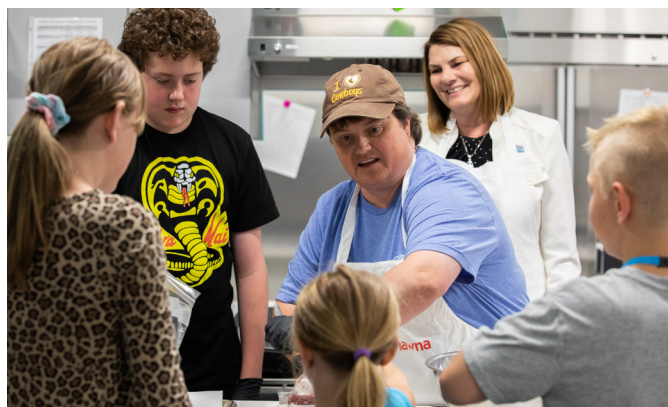
The Need

Students need to feel safe and supported to engage in learning, and to grow relationships. Wyoming youth are facing an uncertain future. Their learning trajectories have changed and many struggle to overcome social isolation, hunger, and mental health challenges. We all have a role to play to help our young people develop the skills that will help them develop into resilient citizens.

The Opportunity

The American Rescue Plan provides Wyoming with a third round of federal stimulus funding for K-12 public education through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER III), estimated at \$303 million that can be spent at the local level on learning recovery strategies, including comprehensive afterschool and summer programs. These ESSER funds give Wyoming the opportunity to serve kids and families better by prioritizing **quality** and **sustainability**:

- ✓ Starting or expanding high-quality out of school time (OST) programs is in the interest of both school districts and OST providers, and we need to increase OST capacity to support every young person in Wyoming. With these funds, OST quality and quality improvement will be more informed and more strategically aligned across shared objectives with schools to positively impact youth outcomes.
- ✓ With these funds, we can better understand connections between existing structures, where there are gaps, and how we can build a stronger, sustainable system together. We know we will have to have more and more meaningful partnerships to equitably close gaps for the kids who most need support, and the most direct path to those partnerships is through investing directly in the community-based organizations who provide OST programs.



Program Spotlight

The Boys and Girls Club of Douglas hosted a family night in conjunction with the Wyoming Hunger Initiative and The Lamb Guys to highlight some tasty ways lamb can be served. Families were treated to a lamb dinner and a quarter lamb to take home. The First Lady of Wyoming, Jennie Gordon, talked about the importance of collaborating with local ranchers like The Lamb Guys to help feed the community. It was followed by games and fun as the community came together to support one another. “It was fun to include the kids and an honor to work with the First Lady,” said Shawna Towner, the Food Service Director.

Photo Inset: From left to right: Nora Portwood, Colby Danos, Shelby Walton, Shawna Towner, Jennie Gordon, Bradley Peterson

Photo Top: The Science Roadshow engaged in active learning with the Riverton 6th, 7th and 8th graders. Students worked to master scientific writing skills.

Leveraging Evidence-Based Programs that Nourish the Whole Child

All learning requires a foundation of support that can't be provided in the school day alone. Out of school time programs are necessary to address social and emotional recovery and accelerate students' academic learning.

High-Quality OST:

- ✓ Develops key social-emotional and 21st Century skills for college, career, and military readiness;
- ✓ Builds positive, supportive relationships, creating the necessary network of support students need to succeed in school, postsecondary pathways, and beyond; and
- ✓ Improves academic outcomes and is proven to accelerate learning gains.



OST programs support our families by providing safe and engaging spaces for kids while their parents are at work. According to the most recent census, 60% of Wyoming families have all caregivers in the workplace.

As well as standing up additional health and safety measures to continue offering in-person care during the pandemic, OST staff are already helping youth recover academic and social-emotional learning, and community-based organizations continue to connect families to critical services and resources such as food, technology, and healthcare.

Let's Work Together

Wyoming must seize this moment to build an interconnected system of support for children and families that nurture the seeds of potential that exist in every young person. We all have a role to play in cultivating the connections across communities that help youth grow strong roots to learn and thrive.

As a community partner, Wyoming afterschool and summer programs can:



Deliver staff and support to help students who need it most



Reach students and families in the under-resourced communities we serve



Offer engaging, hands-on learning activities for students of all backgrounds



Leverage our relationships with community partners and volunteers



Provide staff who are trained to teach youth social-emotional skills



Adapt our programming to meet the needs of students, families, and schools

By using ESSER III funds to initiate and support meaningful collaboration between community organizations and school districts, we can reach and serve all of our students, ensure an equitable recovery, and rebuild the Wyoming education ecosystem to better respond to the needs of our youth and prepare them for a fulfilling future.



The Wyoming Afterschool Alliance is a statewide network working to create the conditions for young people to reach their full potential. We are a priority fund of the Wyoming Community Foundation.

Learn more about Out of School Time Programs in Wyoming.

Michelle Sullivan, Director
Wyoming Afterschool Alliance
Phone: (307) 721-8300
Email: michelle@wyaf.org
Website: wyaf.org

- Facebook: @WyomingOST
- Twitter: @WyomingOST
- Instagram: @wyoming_ost
- LinkedIn: Wyoming Afterschool Alliance