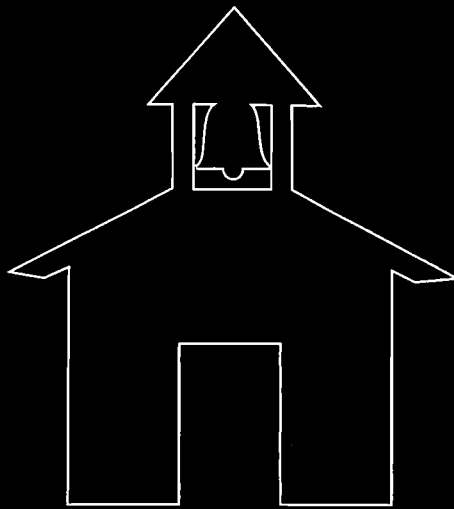

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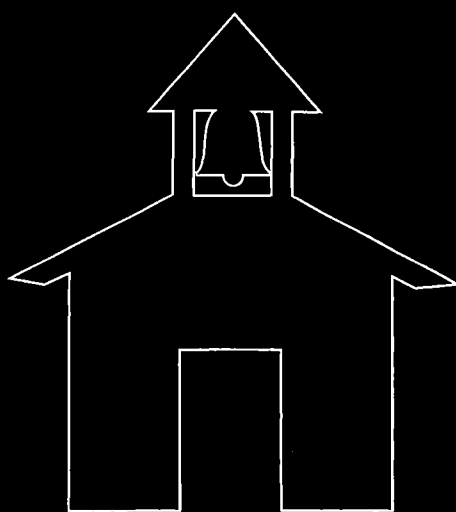
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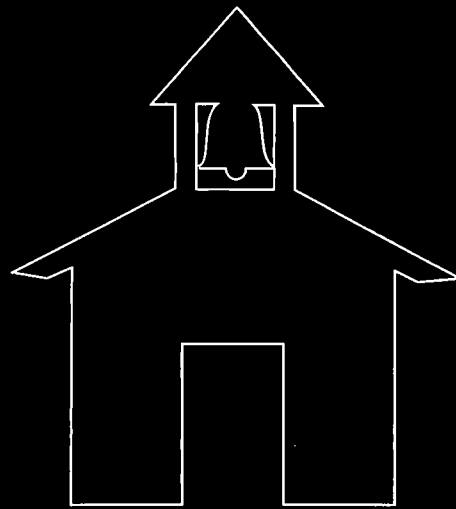
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**Extending Learning in a Safe,
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Before and After School**



FOR RELEASE
June 17, 1997

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(202) 401-1008

COMMUNITIES URGED TO OPEN SCHOOLS; PROVIDE SAFE AFTER-SCHOOL LEARNING

U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley today urged communities to keep school doors open after school lets out to give more children safe and secure places to learn and grow.

At J.O. Wilson Elementary School in Washington, D.C., Riley joined First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton to release *Keeping Schools Open as Community Learning Centers: Extending Learning in a Safe, Drug-Free Environment Before and After School*. The 50-page guidebook is designed to help schools and community-based organizations begin the process of keeping neighborhood schools open for children and families.

"This guidebook gives educators, parents and communities concrete ideas for how to extend learning time in their local schools, through community learning centers," Riley said.

"Keeping school facilities open is common sense, providing safe environments where children can learn and work with caring adults -- and also makes economic sense by allowing communities to use empty school buildings to benefit the entire community."

Schools are the largest capital investment in most neighborhoods throughout the country, although many stand empty after the traditional school day ends. Communities are discovering that schools can be an excellent resource for after-school programs for youth that can include academic enrichment programs such as reading tutoring and mentoring, and drug prevention and safety programs.

-MORE-



The step-by-step guidebook provides examples of communities and schools that are keeping schools open as community learning centers. In Madison, Wis., for instance, the Safe Haven after-school program offers homework help, academic enrichment, arts and crafts, supervised games, physical education and field trips. Each school develops conflict resolution, peer mediation and drug prevention programs that are coordinated with in-school efforts. The school district's community recreation department staffs the program, now in its third year. Safe Haven schools report students have increased attendance, fewer conflicts and more interest in completing their homework.

Successful programs in Chicago; Philadelphia; San Diego; St. Louis; Seattle; Ankeny, Iowa; Charlestown, W. Va.; Elk Grove, Calif.; Flint, Mich.; Murfreesboro, Tenn.; New York City; Waco, Texas; and Alabama and Indiana are also described in the publication.

Among the research-based reasons why schools should be kept open:

- There are few opportunities for young people after school. In 1995, there were 23.5 million school-age children with working parents, but one year earlier, just 3.4 percent of all public elementary and combined (elementary and middle school) school students were enrolled in 18,111 before- or after-school programs at public schools. Fewer than 1 percent of 7th- and 8th-graders are in organized after-school programs. As recently as 1993-94, fully 70 percent of elementary and combined schools lacked after-school programs.
- Working parents cite after-school care for their children as one of their top concerns.
- Organized activities help children resist unsafe behaviors and enhance learning, through the support and supervision offered in quality programs. Students in good programs have better peer relations, better grades and better conduct in schools than their peers in other care arrangements. Under Cooperative Extension Service programs, supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, teachers and principals report students become more cooperative, handle conflicts better and learn to enjoy reading, and schools have fewer incidences of vandalism.
- Much of juvenile crime occurs between 3 and 6 p.m., the hours in which many youths are unsupervised and have little to do.

-MORE-

- After-school activities provide opportunities for positive and sustained interactions with adults, which can contribute to youth development and school achievement.
- Children who spend more time in learning activities and organized extracurricular activities learn more. The finding is especially true for reading and is a foundation for the *America Reads Challenge* proposal.
- Children left to themselves or under the care of siblings are more likely to engage in risky behavior, such as drug and alcohol use, and are more often the victims of accidents and abuse.

Riley said after-school programs can support reading programs as proposed in the President's *America Reads Challenge*, and can also help middle school students master algebra through tutoring and help high school students prepare for college. President Clinton has requested \$50 million to help fund up to 1,000 after-school programs, and the funding request is before Congress.

The guidebook details the steps communities and their partners need to take to convert a school into a community learning center and lists resources for further information or assistance. Included are suggestions for how to estimate costs, develop a budget, build community consensus and partnership, assess needs and resources, design an effective program, consider logistics, obtain a qualified staff and evaluate the program's success.

The U.S. Department of Education developed the guidebook in consultation with the community steering group of its Partnership for Family Involvement in Education. The Partnership is a coalition of more than 3,000 family, school, community, business and religious organizations, with steering groups that include members such as the Boys and Girls Clubs of America, the National Community Education Association, Girl Scouts, the United Way, Big Brothers, Big Sisters, YMCA of the USA, ASPIRA, the National Urban League and many others.

The publication is being sent to interested schools and community groups and is available by calling the U.S. Department of Education at 1-800-USA-LEARN.