

TESTIMONY
OF
JUDITH JOHNSON
ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY
FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
BEFORE
THE CONGRESSIONAL CHILDREN'S CAUCUS
OCTOBER 28, 1999

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Good morning, Congresswoman Jackson Lee, and members of the Caucus. It is a pleasure to be invited to speak with you today on a subject that is dear to the heart of those of us who have served our nation's public schools, as I have over the last 30 years. Children and youth need a safe and enriching environment to learn and grow in their afterschool hours because, as the First Lady perceptively noted, "For too many children, 'home alone' is not a funny movie." Community learning centers, which I am going to talk about with you today, are places where children can thrive -- where learning, enrichment, and recreational activities complement the regular school day.

It seems like a simple concept, but for any of us who are (or hope to be) parents, or are an aunt, uncle, or grandparent, we know providing afterschool opportunities is an issue of extreme urgency. There are not enough afterschool and summer programs to serve our school-age kids. Bringing high quality programs to every community is a very high priority for the American public.

My boss, Education Secretary Riley, understands this. He believes that high quality afterschool programs are an essential component of a strong school -- a

strong community. The school-community partnerships support afterschool programs and help build better schools and stronger neighborhoods ...better schools and stronger neighborhoods build a better America.

That is why President Clinton has proposed to increase the current appropriation for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program from \$200 million in fiscal year 1999 to \$600 million in fiscal year 2000. This dramatic expansion of the program would provide the funds that school-community partnerships need to start or expand afterschool, extended learning programs for school-age children.

~~Serving as~~ providing program for 1.8 million deserving school children.

Already, this program is increasing the supply of high-quality, extended-learning programs in a cost-effective manner, primarily by funding programs that use public schools and their existing infrastructure and that build partnerships with community-based and youth organizations. Community-based organizations can bring to an afterschool program their youth-development experience. Community coalitions have the flexibility to decide, with the school, what their extended learning priorities are -- before-school programming, afterschool learning opportunities, weekend activities, or summer enrichment programs.

Our communities are hungry for these types of afterschool partnerships. The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, that has pledged up to \$83 million to provide technical assistance and training for the multi-year expansion of 21st Century Community Learning Centers, has supported regional technical assistance workshops over the last two years. These workshops provide information to potential applicants about how to run a high-quality program and compete for grants.

Workshop attendance over these two years has been overwhelming – 13,000 community representatives from families, schools, community and civic organizations, local governments, foundations, religious faiths, and businesses came together to find out what quality, extended learning programming is, how to collaborate, and what are some models of best practice. Each year, the interest increases.

For the second year in a row, in addition to the 16,000 application packages we sent to every school district in the country, 17,000 additional requests for

applications went out. Many, many more were down-loaded off the Internet. In terms of actual applications, over 2,000 local communities applied for a 21st Century afterschool grant in FY 1999. They asked for almost \$900 million in aid to begin or expand programming. The U.S. Department of Education made 176 awards totalling \$100 million. Thus, applicants had a less than 1 in 10 chance of being funded and funds available were far short of documented need. (Note: An additional \$100 million went for \$40 million in continuation grants and \$60 million in new grants from the FY 1998 slate.)

The public is clearly demanding more afterschool programs for our young people. According to 1998 and 1999 data from a poll conducted by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, 92 percent of the voting public believe that children should have supervised activities to attend after school. Slightly more (93 percent), believe that school-based, afterschool programs would benefit children.

The most important reasons why voters select schools as sites for afterschool programs are because they believe schools: have the necessary facilities (83 percent), are safe (80 percent), are trusted places (76 percent), and are conveniently

located (80 percent). Indeed, in the one year since the 1998 Mott survey, and in the wake of the tragedy at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, polling data indicate that the public is much more likely to select school districts or individual schools for setting up an afterschool program than any other institutions.

Recent polling data show the public's willingness to pay for an afterschool program for all children:

- In the 1999 Mott/JCPenney survey of the voting public, six in 10 Americans were willing to raise their taxes to pay for a \$1000 a child afterschool program for all children.
- The organization, *Fight Crime: Invest in Kids!* conducted a back-to-school poll in 1999 and found that, by a three-to-one margin, Americans are ready either to pay more taxes or to forgo a tax cut to provide kids with "access to afterschool programs and early childhood" programs. The poll showed that these programs rank evenly (66 percent) with Social Security and Medicare (67 percent) as the

top activities that most Americans say are more important than cutting taxes.

- In addition, according to the most recent survey conducted by the National PTA (December 1998), almost 70 percent of parents support increasing federal funding for afterschool programs.

State and local policymakers recognize that they need help in this area, too. In a 1995 survey of the National League of Cities, 92 percent of respondents cited child care and afterschool programming as the most pressing needs of children and families, and no other need received such a high rating from such a high percentage of respondents. Indeed, the top five recommendations of the action plan for the 1998 United States Conference of Mayors' National Summit all dealt with providing afterschool programming.

In addition, Delaware's Governor Tom Carper, the 1999 Chairman of the National Governors' Association, has made afterschool programming one of his three key issues for the organization. This follows on the heels of major afterschool

legislation or budget increases for afterschool programs being passed in California, Massachusetts, Delaware, Maryland, and Louisiana.

Why is there such an outpouring of interest? While there has been a growth in the availability of afterschool care programs for children over the last 20 years, relatively few organized, extended learning opportunities exist when compared to the need. Let me share with you what we know about who participates in afterschool programs and the overwhelming need to keep our young people productively involved in the afterschool hours.

In 1991, there were 35.9 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 living in the U.S. Approximately 24 million of these school-age children needed child care because of working parents or parents seeking employment. However, only about 1.7 million children from kindergarten through grade 8 were enrolled in 49,500 formal before- and afterschool programs. Extended learning programs in schools were even more scarce, especially for older children and youth.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), in 1993-94, only

974,348 children in public elementary schools (just 3.4 percent of students in public elementary schools) were enrolled in a total 18,111 before- or afterschool programs at public schools. This report found that seventy percent of all public elementary and combined schools did not offer before- or afterschool programs.

According to data from the 1998 Follow-Up Survey of Education Reform, 48 percent of schools do offer some extended learning opportunities. However, only half of them (24 percent) offer extended learning programs to a moderate or great extent. Title I schools are more likely to offer afterschool programs. But, even then, extended learning in these Title I school translates into only an hour a day, five days a week.

In 1998, there were at least 28 million school-age children with their only parent or both parents in the workforce. These children might need an afterschool program to keep them safe, help them learn, and dispel feelings of isolation that often characterize self-care. While, the number of latchkey children was estimated at between 2 million and 15 million children in 1993, the top-end figure is probably closer to reality when you compare the number of children with afterschool needs

in comparison to the supply figures I have described.

The Administration's proposed expansion of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program will bring much-needed attention to the provision of supplementary learning activities in interesting and engaging ways, with activities addressing the needs of young adolescents and the problems of drug use, gang involvement, and violence.

Studies by the FBI and youth-advocacy groups have found that the peak hours for juvenile crime and victimization are from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. -- hours when youth are most often without supervision. In addition, research shows that students who spend 1-4 hours per week in extracurricular activities are 50 percent less likely to use drugs and one-third less likely to become teen parents. These data leave little doubt why the public is interested in afterschool programs in safety terms. But, community learning centers can provide a safe haven for youth, supervised activities, and services focusing on learning enhancement as well as on preventing crime, violence, and substance abuse.

By locating 21st Century Community Learning Centers within schools, we can ensure that students receive educational services directly linked to their classroom needs. Centers can enhance educational opportunities in numerous ways that address what American parents want in terms of better schools.

Centers can offer tutoring to help students master basic skills. Centers can provide middle school students with more opportunities to do hands-on math and science, as well as homework help in these key subjects which are gateway courses to college and good careers.

The afterschool hours are an excellent time to help middle school kids see the possibilities of going to college. Centers can provide mentoring by caring adults and college students to encourage students to set higher academic and career goals. College visits, mentoring, and learning about preparing for college, academically and financially, must start in middle schools if all students, especially low-income and disadvantaged students, have a realistic chance to go to college -- because college is what gives all kids a shot at the "American Dream."

Centers can provide opportunities for children to learn to use technology. Centers can also make core subjects seem more relevant and exciting by linking with local museums, libraries, youth groups, businesses, universities, art centers, and other educational or career-related activities. Many low-income children do not have access to computers at home. Keeping schools open can help them gain access to this essential learning resource.

Centers can provide enrichment opportunities in art, drama, and music, which unfortunately, are often the last courses funded during the regular school day.

Centers can serve as a base for community service and service-learning opportunities. In fact, many before- and afterschool programs operate with the help of AmeriCorps volunteers who mentor, tutor, and work with children.

A recent parent survey asked parents what kind of activities they would like their children to be involved in and found that:

95 percent of parents felt their child would benefit from a program that included technology classes.

91 percent of parents felt their child would benefit from arts, music, and cultural activities.

Among parents of middle school students, 90 percent favored afterschool community service or volunteer opportunities for their children.

These are exactly the kind of activities that the current 21st Century Community Learning Centers projects are providing in 468 local communities across the country. These grants are enabling 1,601 rural and inner-city schools – located in 49 states, the District of Columbia, and the Virgin Islands – to provide programs that will serve 400,000 students and 200,000 community members after school, weekends and summers, in safe, drug-free, and supervised environments.

Principals have long seen a need for extended learning programs; in a 1989 survey, 84 percent of school principals agreed that there is a need for before- and afterschool programs. In 1993, the National Association of Elementary Principals

printed a book for their membership on quality standards for afterschool programs. It has been updated, and the new version will be available in November.

With all of this strong parental and public support for afterschool programs, you might be asking what are the effects of afterschool programs on learning. Research shows that students in high quality afterschool programs demonstrate higher academic achievement and have better attitudes toward school than children left alone or under the care of siblings.

According to the 1999 Shell Education Poll, Youth in afterschool programs are more likely to rate their school as an "A" school or an "A" and "B" school; say their school is a safe place without violence; say that their school challenges students to do their best; and say that their school creates an environment in which students generally treat each other with respect. In addition, these youth are more likely to: earn As and Bs; put their best effort into their school work; aim high and have big ambitions; and plan on continuing their education after graduation from high school. Finally, high school students who take part in afterschool activities exhibit more positive feelings and attitudes toward the pressures of teen life and are

more willing to use their talents in the community.

Recent research on effective schools has found that such schools extend time in reading and mathematics to improve learning and achievement. In a recent study of higher-success and lower-success elementary schools in Maryland, researchers found that the more successful schools saw consistent academic gains as a result of extended day programs. Participation in extended learning programs can be particularly beneficial to disadvantaged or low-achieving students. Children from low-income families often lack the resources that more affluent families can spend on improving the quality of their children's education, both in and out of school. A study of high-performing, high poverty schools found that 86 percent of the schools extended time for reading and 66 percent extended instructional time in mathematics.

For all these reasons and more, the Administration requested in its fiscal year 2000 budget before Congress, \$600 million for Community Learning Centers in order to fund competitive grants to approximately 5,000 centers. If Congress supports expanding the program from its current \$200 million in 1999 to \$600 million in

2000, it will provide extended-hour school services for approximately 1.6 million children per year, with a local 1 to 1 match.

Our reauthorization proposal builds upon the strengths of the current program including the use of school facilities to benefit the entire community and the requirement to establish strong collaborations with community organizations while offering some revisions designed to better target resources and promote the sustainability of programs.

The Educational Excellence for All Children Act of 1999 would:

- Require school districts to match grant funds while extending the grant period up to five years. Experience shows that providing core funding for five years while requiring local communities to commit their own resources, including with other federal resources, through a matching requirement can help ensure that programs remain in place after the grant expires. A matching requirement also will enable more children and adults to be served nationwide.

- Strengthen the requirement that schools and community organizations should collaborate by involving both parties in planning and implementing the project.
- Allow up to 10 percent of the funds in a given year to be awarded to community-based organizations. In some neighborhoods, community organizations may have facilities that are superior to or more centrally-located than the local public schools. In other areas, community organizations may wish to provide services within the schools, and the school district may prefer that such an organization serve as the grantee. To provide flexibility to communities in these situations, we propose to extend eligibility to receive 21st Century Community Center grants to community organizations with the concurrence of the local school district.
- Clarify the targeting to inner cities, rural areas, and small cities with a substantial need for expanded learning opportunities because of, for example, a high proportion of low-achieving students and lack of resources to establish or

expand community learning centers.

- Emphasize the establishment or expansion of afterschool, weekend, and summer programs that offer expanded learning opportunities in a safe, drug-free environment. The current statute requires grantees to provide a broad array of services that benefit the entire community. The Department believes that 21st Century programs should continue to serve the broad needs of their community, but we also believe that, first and foremost, programs must provide expanded learning opportunities to children.

Vice President Gore was absolutely on the mark when he said at a recent press conference on the proposed 21st Century Community Learning Centers expansion,

“This period of time between the school bell and the factory whistle is a most vulnerable time for children. These are the hours when children are more likely to engage in at-risk behavior and are more vulnerable to the dangers that still exist in too many neighborhoods

and communities.”

So what will it take to make families feel secure in the knowledge that their children are not only safe, but filled with the wonder and excitement of learning?

As Secretary Riley has said, “This is an extraordinary and demanding time for our nation’s schools and I ask all Americans to pitch in.”

By providing safe and enriching high-quality afterschool programs, like those available through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, we can all “pitch in” for our kids.

Let me again thank you for holding these hearings on the importance of high-quality before- and afterschool programs for our nation’s children.