

*The following partners participate in the Montana Afterschool Network, a coordinated effort to increase quality afterschool programs statewide:*

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Montana

Boys & Girls Clubs of Montana

Girl Scouts of Big Sky Council

Montana Child Care Resource & Referral Network

Montana Council of Boy Scouts of America

Montana Department of Justice, Board of Crime Control

Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services

Montana Office of Public Instruction, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Program

Montana PTA

Montana Recreation & Park Association

Montana School Boards Association

Montana State University 4-H Center for Youth Development

Office of the Governor of the State of Montana

School Administrators of Montana

For more information or to participate, contact the Montana Out-of-School Time Project at the Montana Child Care Resource & Referral Network (406-549-1186) or the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center Program at the Montana Office of Public Instruction (406-444-3000.)

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# MONTANA EXTRA LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES SUMMIT

March 24 & 25, 2004  
State Capitol, Helena MT

## *Executive Summary*

The Office of Governor Judy Martz, with a grant from the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, sponsored a statewide summit of stakeholders in extra learning opportunities (ELOs). ELOs are programs that provide school-age children ages 5 to 18 with recreational, academic, and development opportunities supplementing the education provided in a typical school day. They may occur before school, after school, or during the school day, as well as on weekends, over holidays, or during the summer. The goal of the Montana ELO Summit was to establish a role for state government in supporting ELOs.

There is evidence that more Montana children need out-of-school time care. In 2003, 54,496 children between the ages of 6 and 12 years lived with parents who worked outside the home. The state's licensed child care system, prevention programs, youth development programs, and school-based/school linked programs have the capacity to provide supervised afterschool activities to 6,608 (12%) of these children per day throughout the school year.

A number of state funding programs through several state agencies support out-of-school time programs in Montana. In 2003, through its Best Beginnings Scholarships program, the Department of Public Health and Human Services paid over \$6.6 million for more than 4,240 school-aged children of low income working parents to attend out-of-school time child care. Through an Early Childhood Services Bureau grant, DPHHS also funds the Montana Out-of-School Time Project to improve availability and quality of school-aged child care.

In 2002, the federal Department of Education moved administration of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Program to states. Since then, Montana's Office of Public Instruction has seeded twenty-one new afterschool programs in hard-to-serve rural and low income communities. These programs also offer services to middle and high school students who need adult supervision and structured activities during out-of-school time.

## ELOs in Montana: Benefits & Challenges

Under the direction of facilitator Fred Schrupf, nationally-known author, trainer, consultant, and current Student Services Coordinator for Spokane Public Schools, the eighty-five NGA-ELO participants broke into small groups to brainstorm and prioritize ELO issues, including the role of state government in supporting ELO programs. Facilitation was assisted by Elisabeth Wright, Senior Policy Analyst for the National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices, and Victoria Wegener, staff to the Afterschool Alliance. Following are summary points from these discussions.

### Benefits of ELOs

- ELOs improve children's safety, reduce crime and teen pregnancy, develop future leadership and skills, and strengthen children's social support networks
- ELOs support parent employment and lower family stress
- ELOs improve children's academic achievement, improve communication within schools, bring parents into schools, and position schools as a community resource
- ELOs reduce future economic expenditures on criminal intervention services
- ELOs provide volunteer and mentoring opportunities for older children and community members, and improve the economic and social environments of communities

### Challenges to ELOs

- ELOs are challenged by student inability to pay fees and lack of transportation
- ELOs are challenged by lack of sustainable funding and universally accepted standards of quality
- ELOs are challenged by difficulties in recruiting, training and compensating paid and volunteer staff
- ELOs are challenged by lack of administrative support for use of school buildings and other limited school resources
- ELOs are challenged by duplication of local services, lack of business partnerships, competition for funding, and lack of time to dedicate to collaboration
- ELOs are challenged to report local, regional and state-level data on need and benefits of their programs

## Action Steps for Montana ELOs

By the end of the Summit, participants had drafted and ratified an agenda of prioritized actions to be implemented at the program, community and state levels. In summary, the group determined to move forward in the following areas:

### Develop State Level Leadership

- Expand the Montana Afterschool Network (MAN) membership and local activities
- Communicate with community-level stakeholders through existing networks
- Partner with state government to improve quality and availability of ELOs statewide

### Create a Common Message

- Gather local and state data on ELO benefits and needs
- Draft a unified advocacy message about afterschool need and benefits
- Use national messages and media resources to promote ELOs

### Work Locally

- Identify local ELO leaders and existing networks
- Educate municipal governments, businesses, parents, schools about ELO benefits and need
- Implement local awareness and advocacy activities for ELO programs

