

TheChildren'sAgenda

Smart Choices. Bold Voices.



For Immediate Release

CONTACTS:

Brigit Hurley, Policy Analyst
The Children's Agenda
(585) 256-2620, ext. 2602
bhurley@thechildrensagenda.org

Mairéad Hartmann
Greater Rochester After-School Alliance
(585) 341-4350
mhartmann@racf.org

**New Report Finds 14,000 City Youth Without Access to
Out-of-School Time Opportunities; Makes the Case for More Programs**

Rochester, NY— A report commissioned by the Greater Rochester After-School Alliance (GRASA) to inventory out-of-school-time programs in Rochester found that only 5,932 or 31% of city children and youth in need have access to these academic and enrichment opportunities.

That leaves 14,479 city youth ages 6 to 17 who are not involved in formal after-school programs held between 3 and 6 p.m., according to the report researched by The Children's Agenda, a local nonprofit children's advocacy organization.

"With nearly 70 percent of Rochester students not engaged in a structured, consistent experience during non-school hours, we are missing a big opportunity to boost their chances of reading at grade level, graduating from high school, and achieving other milestones on a path toward success," said Mairéad Hartmann, program officer at the Community Foundation and co-chair of GRASA.

Research has proven that participation in quality, out-of-school-time programs increases student academic success and can reduce disparities between low-income students and their

middle- to high-income counterparts. A 2013 report by United Way of Greater Rochester showed that, compared to their peers, children participating in quality, United Way-funded after-school programs attend school four more days each year, earn GPAs that are .9 points higher, and score better on standardized math and science tests the more frequently they participate in out-of-school-time programs.

The out-of-school-time inventory also found that a gap exists between the number of available slots in these programs (6,335) and the number of participants (5,932). Families may face barriers that include cost for some programs, transportation, and safety traveling to and from program sites. Sixty out-of-school-time providers were surveyed for this report, including 13 programs that are free because of grant or government funding and those that are fee-based services.

“The average weekly charge is \$166, which is too expensive for low-income families,” said Brigit Hurley, policy analyst at The Children’s Agenda and author of the report. While acknowledging that financial assistance is available for some families for after-school care for children under age 13, Hurley added that “many community organizations offer free or low-cost programs, but there are not enough of them.”

This is the fifth community inventory of out-of-school-time programs conducted since 2002 on behalf of GRASA, a volunteer committee comprised of funders, policymakers, researchers, and after-school family and provider representatives. Earlier inventories found that: 23% of children were in after-school programs in the city in 2002; 9% attended quality after-school programs in 2007; 11% attended quality after-school in 2010; and that most providers in 2011 were prepared to serve youth in grades K-5, but far fewer served older youth.

The purpose of the 2015 inventory done by The Children’s Agenda was to determine how the community has progressed on providing out-of-school-time opportunities for engagement and enrichment, to identify priorities for future advocacy, and to describe the changing landscape of out-of-school-time programming. The report outlined six key recommendations:

- All school-age children and youth (pre-K to 12) should have access to high-quality, out-of-school-time experiences.
- Coordinated advocacy for sustained and increased funding for these academic and enrichment programs should be a priority and happen more urgently.
- Put in place a more coordinated system of information-sharing and student tracking among youth-serving systems and institutions.
- Add an indicator to ROC the Future’s annual report card that focuses on the availability and use of high-quality, after-school, summer learning, and expanded learning opportunities for city youth.
- Invest more in compensation, professional development, and creation of a career track for youth workers in these programs.
- Provide access for all city children to high-quality summer learning to boost their chances of grade-level reading proficiency and school success.

“State funding for these critical programs in Rochester has been flat for many years now, while the poverty rate for children and youth continues to climb,” said Larry Marx, executive director of The Children’s Agenda. “The Children’s Policy Council advocated last year to correct that gap, with support of 69 of our community’s leading government, business, labor, nonprofit, religious, medical, higher education and philanthropic institutions. But meeting our community’s advocacy will require ongoing unity, urgency and focus this year and in years to come.”

Out-of-school-time community advocates also are concerned that current programs continue to focus on maintaining high quality. With \$465,000 in grant support from the Community Foundation, GRASA and many community partners are undertaking a comprehensive approach to evaluate, improve, and sustain effective and accessible out-of-school-time programs for

students, evaluate program data, and assist staff with professional development and access to outside resources. These programs include before-school, after-school, expanded learning, and summer enrichment.

“The community has taken a coordinated approach to broadening our reach with out-of-school-time programs, but we know that *all* youth can benefit from engaging in a quality, after-school program that supports them academically and socially,” said Jennifer Leonard, president and CEO of Rochester Area Community Foundation. Leonard is also chair of ROC the Future, the community’s cradle-to-career initiative that involves K-12 and higher education institutions, and business, government, nonprofit, and philanthropic sector organizations in improving academic achievement for Rochester’s children.

The full report is available to download at www.racf.org/Reports and at www.thechildrensagenda.org.

The Children’s Agenda is an independent, nonpartisan, organization that advocates for evidence-based solutions to improve the health, education and success of our community’s children, like improved access to high quality child care and early education and the Nurse Family Partnership.

GRASA is convened by the Community Foundation. Its mission is to strengthen the quality, quantity, and accessibility of out-of-school time programs in Monroe County for school-age youth through community collaboration.