

Dear Fellow Minnesotans,

It is with great pleasure we share the results of this one of a kind study—*Exploring Supply and Demand for Community Learning Opportunities in Minnesota*. This study was designed to explore Minnesota parent and youth perceptions about afterschool opportunities for young people across the state.

In its 2005 report *Journeys into Community: Transforming Youth Opportunities for Learning and Development*,ⁱ the Minnesota Commission on Out of School Time examined the importance of community learning opportunities during the non-school hours. The Commission created a vision for Minnesota where every youth is engaged, every family has access to quality opportunities, and every community has a clear plan and adequate support for such opportunities.

Since that report, new research has continued to demonstrate the value of such community learning opportunities and the impact these opportunities can have on academic performance, social and emotional development, safety, and the prevention of risk behaviors.ⁱⁱ The accumulated weight of evidence now indicates that these types of opportunities are no longer just nice but are increasingly an essential contributor to the positive development of youth and their success in formal educational setting.

This study, *Exploring Supply and Demand for Community Learning Opportunities in Minnesota*, finds that families do not have equal access to quality opportunities (especially during the summer months). This creates an *opportunity gap* that significantly contributes to educational and developmental disparities across communities, ethnic, racial, and income groups. These disparities are one of Minnesota's greatest challenges to the healthy development and education of Minnesota young people. This is a challenge not just for schools but also for cities and towns across Minnesota where community learning opportunities occur.

This report will provide a statewide perspective on these issues. Visit the report webpage at <http://www.extension.umn.edu/AppliedYouthResearch/> for regional findings. Both will inform your thinking about how your region and type of community are faring when it comes to providing engaging community learning opportunities for all.

Credits: This report would not have been possible without the commitment, talent, and energy of many people who played a part in the study: the Wilder Research staff—particularly Greg Owen and Nicole Martin Rogers—who provided assistance with all aspects of survey creation and data collection; assistance from Promise Fellow Tremaine Versteeg, for sorting and categorizing data; graduate assistant Yuefeng Hau for literature review; special thanks to funding partners and others who helped inform this work—Minnesota Department of Education; the McKnight foundation; Minnesota Department of Human Services; Youth Community Connections; special thanks go to Alyssa Thomas and Chrysa Otto, whose creativity, organizational skills and flair for presentation made this data come to life.

i. Minnesota Commission on Out-of-School Time. (2005). *Journeys into community: Transforming youth opportunities for learning and development*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota. Available at <http://www.mncost.org>.

ii. See appendix A for a summary of research on why out of school time opportunities matter.